

PASSING LANE: WILL THE AFL-CIO DUMP KIRKLAND?  
March 20 - April 2, 1995

# IN THESE TIMES

the alternative newsmagazine

## AFFIRMATIVE ACTION R.I.P.

GOODBYE AND GOOD RIDDANCE?

An essay by Salim Muwakkil

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# EDITORIAL

## THE UNPOPULAR REVOLUTION

In the '60s some New Leftists asked, "What if we gave a revolution and nobody came?" They never got a chance to find out, but now Newt Gingrich and his cabal claim that they are indeed making a revolution—a claim that the media seems content to take seriously—and guess what: nobody is coming.

It's not that Republican revolutionaries are not serious about tearing down the already tottering structure of social protections that have been constructed over the past 50 years. It's just that the American people are not on board.

For example, in the debate on the balanced-budget amendment, the Republican leadership refused to accept a provision that would protect the Social Security fund from being looted. Yet, according to a Times-Mirror Center for the People & the Press poll taken last month, 70 percent of Americans oppose a balanced-budget amendment that would threaten Social Security. When Senate Democrats defeated the amendment, Senate Majority Leader Bob Dole and House Speaker Newt Gingrich threatened Democrats with dire defeat in 1996. Yet, according to the *New York Times*, the two North Dakota senators who cast the decid-

ing votes against the budget amendment have become local heroes.

Nevertheless, Americans are concerned about the national deficit. Indeed, by a margin of 56 percent to 37 percent, the public believes it is more important to balance the budget than to cut middle-class taxes. Yet by a margin of 70 percent to 24 percent, the public believes that maintaining Social Security and Medicare is more important than deficit reduction.

In short, Americans want to preserve their entitlements, and more. Thus, 79 percent of respondents in a February survey conducted by the Times-Mirror Center said that they approve of Bill Clinton's promise to increase the minimum wage to \$5.25 per hour, despite the profound hostility to this idea on the part of leading Republican revolutionaries.

Americans have been treated to a lot of wind-blown hype about the Contract with America, and to incessant media soundbites by Gingrich and his colleagues about giving the government back to the people. But the public does not support the policies being rushed through without serious public debate.

In the stampede of the first 100 days, the corporate bottom line has been touted by the revolutionaries as the measure of all things good. In the process, the voice of corporate America has drowned out the voice of the people. Consider environmental protections. Gingrich and company want to submit them to cost-benefit analysis, which means balancing corporate profit against such matters as clean air and water, preserving endangered species, and saving wetlands and national forests from destruction. Yet last year, the Times-Mirror Center tells us, 82 percent of the public believed that "there need to be stricter laws and regulations to protect the environment."

Then, too, most Americans believe that Congress should stress jobs and crime. A substantial majority support the ban on assault weapons that the revolutionaries have pledged to overturn. Similarly, 63 percent of the public disagrees with Republican proposals to deny welfare to unmarried mothers under the age of 18.

And remember health care? The revolutionaries totally ignore it, but the public sees it as the second most important problem facing the nation, even more important than jobs, according to a 1994 Times-Mirror survey.

And, finally, there's military spending, with which the Republican hawks terrorize moderate Democrats. Increased military spending is a centerpiece of their contract, but only 15 percent of the public supports it.

There's more, but no space here to lay it out. And anyway, the point should be clear by now: these revolutionaries do not represent America. Their contract, which to be valid would require a meeting of minds, expresses only the will of the party of the first part.

But who is to represent the party of the second part? Apparently not the president, who, instead of leading an aggressive educational campaign around these issues, has chosen to seek accommodation in the vain hope of winning over some of the Republican constituency. There is a great opportunity here, but, with the exception of few scattered members of Congress, all we have seen from the leadership so far is the silence of the Democratic lambs. If history teaches us anything, it is that such a path leads only to disaster. ◀

*Despite the hype, ordinary Americans oppose the policies of the new Republican revolutionaries.*

## IN THESE TIMES

"...with liberty and justice for all"

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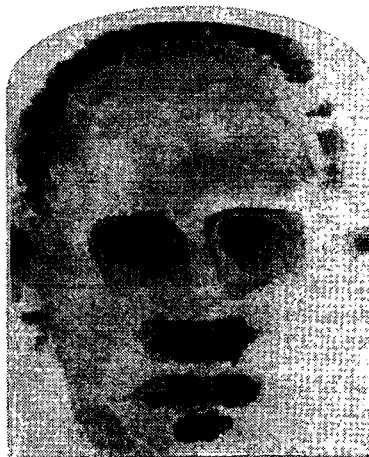


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## LETTERS

## See the difference

In *ITT*'s February 26 issue, Leora Tanenbaum repeats what is rapidly becoming a cliché on the left: that "difference feminism" is inherently conservative. "If you close your eyes, you can hardly distinguish between 'difference' and Darwinian feminists," she writes. With all due respect, she should try looking at the subject with her eyes open.

Most feminist writers on gender difference do not rely on Darwinist ideas like sexual selection to explain the differences they point out. Some (Nancy Chodorow and, to a lesser extent, Carol Gilligan) use the psychoanalytic concept of "object relations" to argue that the way children depend completely on their mothers in infancy affects girls differently than boys. Girls, it is argued, identify with the caring, relational aspect the mother turns toward them, while boys reject

this role in order to establish their separate masculine identity.

Other "difference feminists," such as Nancy Hartsock in *Money, Sex, and Power*, explain gender differences in historical materialist terms, as a reflection of the economic and power structures of particular societies. Still others ignore the question of origins completely.

Wherever gender differences may have come from, to ignore them is to perpetuate an unequal and oppressive society. Whether we are talking about classroom dynamics, workplace relations, sex, marriage or politics, what empowers some few men often disenfranchises the vast majority of women.

It should go without saying that the needs and desires of women vary widely. That is why feminist theorists like Shane Phelan have been urging us to go beyond the shallow debate between "equality" and "difference" feminism and get specific about the particular

experiences and demands of definite groups of women. The point is that women's claims do not have to be rooted in biology to be real and to be taken seriously. Far from an ideology of "separate spheres," as Tanenbaum charges, difference feminism and theories that build on its strengths are opening the doors of political debate to all citizens, male and female.

Dennis Fischman  
Somerville, Mass.

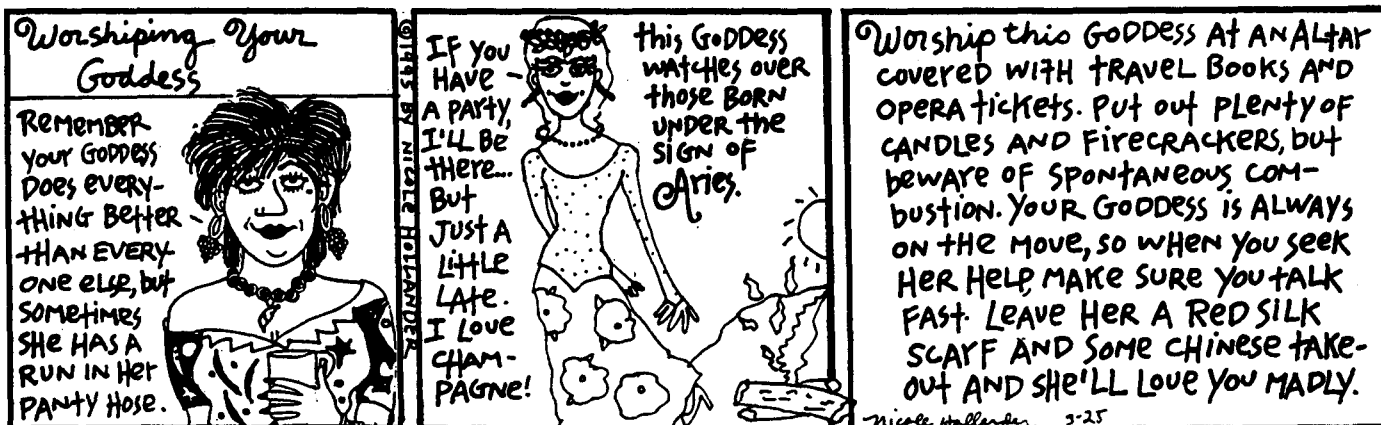
*Leora Tanenbaum replies: It's nice of Dennis Fischman to give me a 30-second lesson in feminist theory about gender differences. But in fact, nowhere in my article did I dismiss differences, of whatever origin, between men and women. Rather, I critiqued the way gender differences are explained through evolutionary biology—an approach that even its adherents admit is based on speculation. Neo-Darwinists argue that it makes evolutionary sense that women are naturally coy while men are aggressive, that men are naturally more adulterous than women, and that women who sleep around don't make suitable wives. Rather eye-opening, wouldn't you say?*

## Fact or fiction?

I read with interest the article by Walter C. Farrell Jr., James H. Johnson Jr. and Cloyzelle K. Jones (*ITT*, October 17) criticizing the establishment of public-private partnerships in

SYLVIA

by Nicole Hollander





American schools. The subject certainly is appropriate grist for the public policy mill, but the authors have an absolute obligation to base their policy conclusions on facts—an obligation they failed to meet in their discussion of Education Alternatives, Inc. (EAI) and its management of Baltimore's public school system.

The authors claim that when EAI began managing Baltimore's public schools, we laid off workers, reduced the pay and benefits of remaining staff, and dispensed with past commitments to minority workers and contractors—thus “creating a ripple of negative economic effects across the broader minority community.” This is simply not true. Here are the undisputed facts about EAI's role in the Baltimore schools:

1. No Baltimore city employees were laid off as a consequence of the public-private partnership established between Baltimore city schools and the Alliance for Schools That Work.

2. Not only were no employees laid off, but employees then present were given the opportunity to stay in their positions at or above their then-current pay level. The guarantee of no layoff and the opportunity to work at or above the then-current pay level were both provisions stemming from agreements with the mayor of Baltimore, Kurt Schmoke.

3. The compensation of educational aides and paraprofessionals was not reduced. Furthermore, health care and pension benefits for all of these employees remained unchanged. Additional associate teachers were hired at approximately the beginning hourly rate for paraprofessionals.

4. New employees hired by Johnson Controls to fill maintenance, food service, secretarial and other noninstructional services were all hired—with wage and full benefit programs—from the community. This had the effect of increasing the number of minority workers from the community, since no existing workers were laid off. Moreover, because these new employees were younger, they tended to have more children in the public schools than did the

older, transferred employees.

5. Finally, the city of Baltimore has an employment requirement relating to women and minorities for all its contractors that, ironically, does not apply to the city or school district itself. In other words, we live, operate and have effectively met stringent minority hiring requirements to which the school district was never subjected. Therefore, the conclusions you have drawn in your article about hiring patterns are just the opposite of reality. Additional minority workers were hired, and that had the ripple effect of improving the minority community economically.

I do not object to articles impugning public-private partnerships, which are sometimes mistakenly called privatization. However, your criticism flows from a set of “facts” that turns out to be untrue in every single detail. No one was laid off, no salaries were reduced and new people were hired from the minority community. These facts would appear to support a different conclusion than the one presented in your article—an article based on the curious conclusion that public school systems exist for the purpose of providing public employment and welfare.

David A. Bennett

President  
Education Alternatives, Inc.  
Minneapolis

*Farrell, Johnson and Jones reply: David A. Bennett is a “spinmaster” when it comes to his role in managing educational programs. While serving as deputy superintendent of the Milwaukee public schools in 1977, he authored a “busing plan” that unfairly placed the burden of integration on black children. Bennett decided to close schools in Milwaukee's inner city and force black students to select from a list of schools in Milwaukee's white communities. When the black community vigorously protested the unfairness of this “forced choice” plan, Bennett backpedaled, labeling it a “voluntary” program.*

*It is within this context that his comments about EAI's role in public school privatization in Baltimore must be understood. David Bennett's facts are*

*“his facts.” What we have endeavored to present is the “truth.” Throughout his professional career, Bennett has demonstrated an uncanny ability to put a “smiley face” on inequitable practices that he has initiated in public education for people of color.*

*First, we made no claim that “Baltimore city employees were laid off.” To the contrary, we noted that paraprofessionals and educational aides, most of whom were minorities, were subjected to reduced wages and an elimination of benefits in those schools that EAI managed, and that some were laid off—as was reported to us by employees of the Baltimore public schools. Moreover, those workers were not provided the opportunity to stay in their positions, with the same compensation package, in the original schools where they were employed.*

*Second, new employees hired by EAI's partner, Johnson Controls, were not hired with the same wages and benefits as their predecessors. The whole point of privatization is to reduce costs. Thus, EAI and its partners have followed the traditional route of turning a profit while feeding at the public trough. But what is most offensive about Bennett's criticism is his suggestion that we believe public school systems exist solely “for the purpose of providing public employment and welfare.” That is simply untrue.*

*We believe public schools were established to serve a broad range of public interests, which include the interests of families and neighborhoods as well as children. They were not established to become profit centers for a private sector corporation such as EAI.*

*Finally, it is ironic that Bennett would attack us for confusing our facts since EAI has had so much trouble providing accurate information about student performance in the schools it manages. Twice in the past two years, EAI has released falsified data on student performance. Although it claimed that this was done inadvertently, EAI has exhibited a consistent pattern of being unable to tell the truth. David Bennett's criticism of our article exhibits those same difficulties.*

# InSHORT



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## THE RIGHT BREW NOW

**B**urma and Guatemala, both countries of natural beauty and ethnic diversity, have for many years also ranked among the world's worst violators of labor and human rights. But public pressure on U.S. companies operating in the two countries has in recent weeks scored important victories for democracy and better working conditions in those troubled lands.

Last month, the rapidly expanding gourmet coffee chain Starbucks agreed to formulate a code of conduct for its Guatemala coffee growers. The company acted in response to picketing at its stores organized by the U.S./Guatemala Labor Education Project. Project director Stephen Coats, who will work with a company task force to draft the code over the next six months, hopes it will at least guarantee workers the freedom to organize unions, gain better housing, protect child laborers and raise the minimum wage.

The minimum pay for rural laborers—which is now set at \$2.50 a day but



## And uzi makes three....

Serbia's Commander Arkan, wanted for murder and bank robbery by Interpol, and the leader of a private Serbian militia widely accused of atrocities, is now settling happily into married bliss,



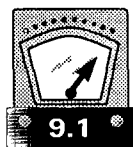
Britain's *Guardian* reports. At a recent ceremony in Belgrade,

punctuated by occasional gunfire from the groom and his enthusiastic guests, Arkan wedded popular singer Ceca, known as the leading purveyor of "turbo-folk," a style of music that is all the rage among the younger Serbian set. Arkan, who appeared at the wedding in military garb and brandishing a machine gun, has his fans as well. "They're such a beautiful pair, so much in love, a model for the rest of the Serbs," one overjoyed onlooker told reporters.

## Family values

After brothers David and Bryan Freeman were arrested for the triple murder of their parents and a younger brother earlier this year, press and police attention has focused on a local Pennsylvania neo-

Nazi compound at which the boys were apparently regular visitors. Mark Thomas, who runs the compound, says he never met David Freeman



(who has the phrase "siege hell" tattooed on his forehead), though he does

acknowledge that Bryan (with a swastika tattoo on his neck) has visited the compound—but only once, Thomas says, and only for an Oktoberfest celebration that was all in good fun. "There was a bonfire," Thomas told a *New York Times* interviewer. "There were marshmallows. It was a family kind of thing."

## Wearing of the green

According to the Associated Press, Fidel Castro recently asked a Dutch fashion designer to help him snazz up his



wardrobe, which up until now has consisted mainly of military fatigues. "He

normally wears warm green," explained the designer, Merel van 't Wout. "He looks great in it, and I think that's fine, but my advice is something else."

## APPALL-O-METER SCALE

1. Models Inc.—redible
2. Infomercial Irritating
3. Plausibly deniable
4. L.A.P.D. blue
5. Bob Dole-icious
6. Raoul Cédras-tic
7. Ollie North nasty
8. Holiday in Rwanda
9. Zhirinovskyesque
10. Where have you gone, Joe Goebbels?

is often not paid—is far less than the \$7.50 a day that the Guatemalan government says is necessary to escape poverty. Yet even paying that higher wage would only add about 10 cents to the retail cost of a pound of coffee beans, which Starbucks typically sells for nearly \$9, Coats says.

Starbucks was a natural target since it prides itself on being socially responsible, printing on its coffee cups the slogan "caring for those who grow our coffee." Although the company is the largest corporate contributor to the international charity CARE, Coats argues that "you wouldn't need CARE if workers were given a living wage."

Although some retailers, like Levi Strauss, Reebok and Wal-Mart, have adopted (often weak) codes of conduct for their overseas suppliers, this is the first code of conduct to be adopted for agricultural workers. "In principle, it's a major victory," Coats says. "It has the potential to benefit huge numbers of people." Starbucks buys less than 1 percent of Guatemala's coffee. But if other gourmet purveyors follow suit, many of the more than 600,000 full- or part-time coffee workers in Guatemala may benefit. Starbucks says that it eventually wants to extend the code developed in Guatemala to its worldwide operations, which could affect 500,000 rural coffee workers.

Picketing retail stores and leafletting customers helped bring a victory as well in the human rights battle against SLORC (State Law and Order Restoration Council), the military junta that has ruled Burma since a bloody coup in 1988. After a series of demonstrations starting before Christmas, Eddie Bauer, the upscale clothes retailer, announced on February 1 that it would no longer manufacture products in Burma, which has been renamed Myanmar by SLORC.

Amoco, Liz Claiborne, Levi Strauss and a few other companies have also pulled out of Burma, at least in part due to protests and organized stockholder pressure. However, Pepsico, Arco, Texaco and Unocal continue to do business there. The oil and gas operations are by far the most serious, since they provide the SLORC with desperately needed foreign currency to finance its expanding military. Construction of Unocal's gas pipeline to Thailand has led to increased SLORC use of unpaid forced labor by civilians, displacement of ethnic groups, destruction of rainforest, and intensified government attacks on rebel strongholds in the pipeline area.

The Burmese rights campaign, which has been guided by socially conscious investment companies such as Franklin Research & Development Corp. and Progressive Asset Management, has developed a base of support on many university campuses, much like the anti-apartheid campaign of the 1980s. (Citizens for Participation in Political Action, or CPPAX, at 25 West Street, Boston, Mass. 0211, has put together a campus action guide and serves as a national clearinghouse for Burmese rights groups.)

Besides pressing stockholder resolutions and consumer boycotts at the oil companies, Burmese rights campaigners are organizing against selective purchasing legislation by city and state governments. Late in February, for example, the city of Berkeley, Calif., voted to prohibit purchase of goods or services from companies doing business in Burma. The state of Massachusetts, as well as several other cities, is considering similar legislation.

The Berkeley vote "was the breakthrough we were looking for," says Franklin Research senior analyst Simon Billenness. "This can put millions of dollars—billions if we get the states—in purchasing power behind the boycotts. ... It affects not only U.S. but foreign companies considering going into Burma. It increases our leverage exponentially."

—David Moberg



## PUERTO RICO LEAVES STATUS SEEKING ASIDE

For nearly 100 years, that is, since the U.S. Army first debarked on Puerto Rico's southern shore, the island's politics have been dominated by the debate over its status: Should it become a state of the Union, an independent nation, a "commonwealth" (as has been the case since 1952), or something else again? Political identity, understandably, has been such an obsession that it has been difficult to bring more burning social issues onto the table.

Times may be changing, however. Puerto Ricans went to the polls last November to vote on two ballot initiatives that—for the first time in the island's history—had nothing directly to do with Puerto Rico's political status. The first concerned the problem of bail for defendants in criminal cases. Puerto Rico Gov. Pedro Roselló, the father of both ballot questions, wanted voters to approve an amendment to the island's constitution authorizing courts to deny bail to defendants accused of certain categories of serious crimes, and to multiple offenders. Crime has become such an urgent matter that, at least for the moment, it has edged out political status at the top of the island's agenda. The aim of the second measure was to allow the government to name two extra judges to the Puerto Rican Supreme Court. (There are currently seven, and Roselló wanted nine.) According to Roselló, both measures, if approved, would have significantly aided the state in fighting crime.

Like the status referendums of the past, this was clearly a political operation whose sponsor had very specific objectives in mind. Roselló, leader of the pro-statehood New Progressive Party (PNP), had already lost his bid, in November 1993, to gain majority approval for turning Puerto Rico into the 51st state. This time around, Roselló left status politics aside and attempted to score points on the burning issue of criminal justice. Puerto Rico, with its 15 percent official unemployment rate and more than 60 percent living below the poverty line, has been plagued by crime—much of it drug-related. An average of two to three murders are committed every day on the island of 3.7 million, and armed robberies are common. Roselló portrays himself as the "tough cop," an image he has cultivated since his term began two years ago by sending squads of armed police and National Guardsmen into low-rent housing projects.

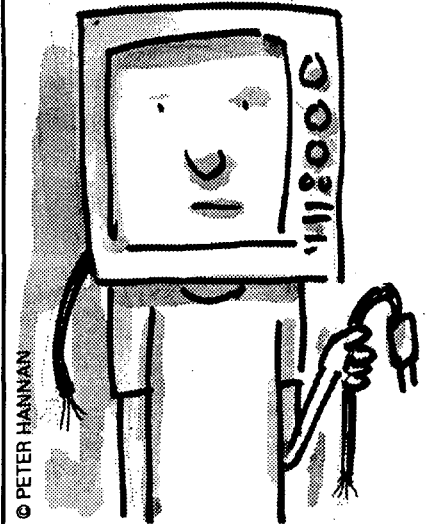
Nearly all the polls published in the weeks prior to the balloting indicated that Roselló was heading to a landslide victory on the two questions. But to the great astonishment of all those who believed the pollsters—including most journalists and academic observers—both of Roselló's measures were defeated. The bail question lost by 53 percent to 47 percent and the Supreme Court initiative was turned back by 54 percent to 46 percent.

Although it is always hazardous to attribute motivations to voters, analysts speculated that a majority of Puerto Ricans were loath to dilute individual rights, even in the name of fighting crime. Apparently, many voters also felt that Roselló was exploiting the referenda for partisan gain.

The defeat of the referenda is clearly a blow to Roselló, who is now widely seen as a lame-duck governor who can do no better than muddle through until new elections in 1996. But it may be difficult for the opposition Popular Democratic Party (PPD) to derive lasting momentum from the referendum. PPD leaders—including San Juan Mayor Hector Luis Acevedo, the party's 1996 gubernatorial candidate—were late in developing a campaign to oppose the referendum measures. This lateness reflected reluctance among many party leaders to be seen as soft on crime by pleading publicly for a "no" vote.

### MEDIA BEAT

By Pat Aufderheide



### Conservative culture only

Tele-Communications Inc. (TCI), the nation's largest cable-system owner, has announced that it will be offering subscribers a new package of political channels—unfortunately, they are grossly skewed to the right. The conservative National Empowerment Television and the American Conservative Network are flanked on the "left" by C-SPAN and the American Political Network, both militant middle-of-the-roads.

Come this fall, TCI plans to drop the only channel it now carries that has been frankly left-of-center, the '90s Channel, which features grass-roots and independent video. In fact, TCI had threatened to drop the '90s Channel two years ago. But the cable giant was forced to continue carrying its programming when the channel took TCI to court for attempting to renege on their broadcasting agreement. According to '90s Channel president John Schwartz, TCI plans to stop running its programs when their agreement



expires in October. Anyone interested in keeping the '90s Channel on TCI can write to TCI president John Malone at TCI, Terrace Tower II, 5619 DTC Parkway, Englewood, CO 80111-3000.

### Smoke screen

The George F. Polk Award that ABC won for its investigation of the tobacco industry comes none too soon. Philip Morris filed a \$10 billion libel suit after the ABC newsmagazine *Day One* charged that tobacco companies load extra nicotine into cigarettes. The *Tyndall Report*, a newsletter analyzing network news coverage, found that reporting on the tobacco industry has plummeted on all three major networks since the lawsuit was filed. Their caution may be financial as well as legal. According to *Variety*, Philip Morris spent more than \$424 million on network advertising for products such as Kraft cheese and Miller beer.

### Safest Sex

Pornography has a long history of priming the pump of new media businesses—home video rental is perhaps the most notorious example. Apparently, sexual curiosity is also a major driver for the rapid increase in the Internet's on-line customers—who are growing at a rate of 15 percent per month. *Wired* magazine reminds readers that four of the top 10 discussion groups on the popular Usenet service are about sex. Would-be sex-surfers need to research commercial services, though, since some block such discussion groups.

The PPD, standard-bearer of the prevailing commonwealth status, has had trouble defining its political project in recent years. Associated from the '40s to the '60s with industrialization and rising standards of living, the PPD is now left with no program but to lobby discreetly for the maintaining of the federal tax laws that make the island a magnet for certain kinds of industrial investments. The "industrialization-by-invitation" policy, which once succeeded in generating jobs and improving living standards, has been failing for over 20 years now—roughly since the recession of 1974-75—and neither the PPD nor the PNP has come up with a convincing alternative scheme of development.

What was perhaps most noteworthy about the November referendum was the near-absence of any talk about political status. The Puerto Rican Independence Party, which firmly opposed both measures, did denounce Roselló for having a hidden statehood agenda—arguing that a "yes" victory on the bail question would have more closely aligned Puerto Rican law with that of the 50 states, where the right to bail is not unrestricted. But this aspect of the question received little attention outside the narrow circle of politicians and lawyers for whom status politics remains the supreme and all-important issue.

In Puerto Rico, where status questions have dominated political life even as the island's social fabric has disintegrated, November's election represents a key step toward political maturity. At long last, the island's pressing social problems have become a central issue of public discourse. It is certainly a sign of the times that the next Independence Party candidate for governor, the very popular legislator David Noriega, will be running on a platform of clean government and better public service. He promises not to make independence an issue in his campaign.

—James A. Cohen

### Tomorrow's News Tonight

By Steve Brodner

Republicans pass "Risk Assessment." Celebrate with endangered species barbecue and fundraiser.



## IN PERSON



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## CREW MEMBERS

*On board with  
Maria Hinojosa*

National Public Radio correspondent Maria Hinojosa was dumbfounded when a New York teenager gave his rationale for killing a kid from Utah during a subway robbery on Sept. 2, 1990—he wanted some money so he could go dancing. “What? To go *dancing*? I had a hard time understanding this, just as a lot of people did,” writes Hinojosa in her book *Crews: Gang Members Talk to Maria Hinojosa*.

“I kept asking myself—what makes it so easy now for kids to turn to violence?” says the 33-year-old reporter. For answers, she went out to the killer’s neighborhood in Flushing, Queens, and talked to members of his crew, Flushing’s Top Society (FTS), about their violent lives.

For five months Hinojosa interviewed more than a dozen teenagers, recording about 50 hours of audiotape. For the book she changed their names, and some of the 32 photographs contributed by German Perez, Hinojosa’s husband, are altered to make faces unidentifiable. The youths she talked to came from the Philippines, Ecuador, Colombia and upstate New York. To aid the reader, Hinojosa furnishes a glossary of 47 slang expressions, plus six Spanish phrases.

Hinojosa discovered that many New York youth belong to small crews that lack the hierarchy of Los Angeles-style gangs. At a book-signing in Hyde Park, the South Side Chicago neighborhood where she grew up, she explains: “A crew is like the clique you had in high school.” The crew’s names, such as GIC (“Girls in Control”), combine playground panache with territorial tribalism. Coki, who

## ETC.

By Dave Mulcahey

## History's bad apples

Anyone who wonders what business theorists mean when they talk about “information as commodity” should consider the case of *Who Built America?*, a CD-ROM that some claim is being suppressed with the acquiescence of the Apple Computer Co.

The award-winning survey of turn-of-the-century American history, originally published in paperback by Pantheon in 1992, was recently adapted for CD-ROM by the American Social History Project and the Voyager Company. This past December, Apple bought more than 12,000 copies of *Who Built America?* to bundle with computer equipment it sells to schools across the country.

Given the impressive data-storage capacity of the CD-ROM format, the editors of the “electronic book” were free to be eclectic and inclusive, to gather information from various historical sources. It contains, in addition to the text and pictures from the original, four and a half hours of audio, 45 minutes of archival film and more than 5,000 pages of historical documents. Some of the material presented departs from the standard fare found in most high school and college history texts. Not only are the experiences of workers, sharecroppers and immigrants presented, but so are those of homosexuals, transvestites and early partisans of birth control and abortion.

Within a month of sealing the deal with Voyager, howev-



er, Apple appears to have changed its mind. In early January, according to Voyager officials, Apple asked the company to excise all discussions of homosexuality, abortion and birth control that appear on the CD-ROM, citing unspecified complaints from customers. Voyager refused, offering instead to replace *Who Built America?* with other offerings from their catalog for any schools that objected. Instead, according to Voyager, Apple merely informed the company that it would no longer carry *Who Built America?*

Apple refuses to comment on its communications with Voyager, but the company appears to be backpedaling. Apple spokesperson Stacey Byrnes acknowledges that the company has received complaints about the controversial material from some school boards, but she denies that the company has decided to drop *Who Built America?* from its bundles. Byrnes also denies that Apple is buckling to right-wing pressure. "This is not an issue of censorship," she says. "It's an issue of customer satisfaction."

It is this kind of evasiveness that particularly rankles *Who Built America?* co-editors Roy Rosenzweig, Steve Brier and Joshua Brown. To claim that Apple is not accountable for a sort of de facto censorship, they claim, is to ignore the issue of the justice of the market. "To meet Apple's standards," Rosenzweig, Brier and Brown wrote in a message distributed on the Internet, "*Who Built America?* would have to please everyone, a quality virtually unattainable in any work of lasting intellectual and pedagogical worth."

calls himself an "intelligent hood" because "I go to school," describes FTS as "more like a go-out, hang-out kind of group."

There weren't any gangs at the integrated, upscale high school Hinojosa attended, but in 1980 after her first year at Barnard College, she encountered the Latin Kings at a Comprehensive Employment and Training Act summer job. Working at a daycare project at Casa Aztlán, a social service and cultural center in Chicago's Pilsen neighborhood, she once had to escort a co-worker across turf lines in the midst of a street festival. She recalls having to stand by him "so they wouldn't shoot him."

Born in Mexico, Hinojosa traces her public radio career back to hearing a Latin American news program on Chicago public radio station WBEZ when she was 15 years old. At WKCR, Columbia University's student radio station, she started a weekly three-hour program called "Nueva Cancion y Demás" (New Songs and More).

After graduating magna cum laude, Hinojosa got an internship at NPR's "All Things Considered," which in 1985 led to a production assistant position with Scott Simon on "Weekend Edition." Meanwhile, she freelanced on the side for the Spanish-language version of NPR, and later moved from New York to San Diego to become its producer. She returned to New York in 1987 to work for CBS News, where she wrote Walter Cronkite's radio commentaries. But, drawn to reporting, she headed to Central and South America where she freelanced stories for NPR. In 1990, NPR eventually hired her as a reporter. And she now hosts NPR's "Latino USA" show.

Hinojosa lives in New York City's Manhattan Valley, near Spanish Harlem. One time, interviewing crew members in Flushing, Hinojosa commented to Coki: "This is a pretty nice neighborhood. It's better than the neighborhood I live in." Another time, as she was being walked to the subway after an interview, she asked FTS member Shank: "So why should I feel safe around you guys?" He answered: "We respect you because you showed us respect. We don't like people who are afraid of us. We're not that bad. We just want recognition."

Says Hinojosa: "The experience of having a microphone directed at him was a lifeline to the outer world. He said that now my husband and I are his crew. I mean, we're family. He's a dear, dear friend."

Shank has recently been reading Goethe. When in Chicago, Hinojosa went through her books from college and pulled out a few titles to take back to New York for him—James Joyce's *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, Franz Kafka's "The Metamorphosis" and Jean-Paul Sartre's *The Plague*. She brought him to the microphone at a gala dinner in Manhattan when her 1990 NPR story won a journalism award. Since then, Shank has appeared on WBAI, New York's Pacifica station, and joined Hinojosa on a trip to a Hartford, Conn., bookstore where she read a selection about him from *Crews*.

Shank, now age 22, watched unnoticed from the sidelines and later told Hinojosa: "God, these people who look so different than me—who I thought I had nothing that I could share with—really do care. They really care about my life."

Says Hinojosa, "I'm concerned that all of America's problems seem to be coming from people of color and the inner city, as if we are the harbingers of societal destruction and such."

She says she next wants to do some reporting on white racist gangs and pursue stories outside the metropolis. "A lot of problems and issues are based in the suburbs that we just don't hear and see."

—Bill Stamets

# T H E F I R S T S T O N E

## DIOXIN AS A "THERAPEUTIC AGENT," AND OTHER PR TALES

By Joel Bleifuss

**G**reg Louganis, or more specifically his HIV-infected blood, has helped give chlorine a good name. Last month, Louganis admitted that he was HIV-positive when he cut his head on a diving board during the 1988 Olympics. On March 6, the Chlorine Chemistry Council, a subsidiary of the Chemical Manufacturers Association, happily informed its members that more than 40 major media outlets have since reported that chlorine used in the pool probably deactivated the AIDS virus.

The timing couldn't have been better for the council, which has been busy defending chlorine on a number of fronts. In September, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) released its long-awaited reassessment of dioxin, the highly toxic compound that is produced during many industrial chlorine processes. EPA researchers confirmed what environmentalists have been saying for years: that dioxin wreaks havoc on human reproductive and immune systems. But the reassessment, thanks in part to the council's PR efforts, has received little attention. And most Americans remain blissfully unaware of last month's Greenpeace report providing evidence that the production and incineration of polyvinyl chloride (PVC) plastic is a leading source of the dioxin that continues to accumulate in the nation's food chain. (See *In These Times*, March 6.) Of course, the council has worked hard to ensure that its vision of chlorine is the one that dominates public attention.

On Sept. 28, 1994, soon after the EPA released its long-awaited dioxin reassessment, the Chlorine Chemistry Council sponsored a workshop titled "Chlorine Chemistry: The Future is in Our Hands." With dozens of industry execu-

tives in attendance, council officials outlined their public relations strategy.

One invitee, who is both connected to the chlorine industry and conscious of the effects dioxin has on the environment, took extensive notes at the workshop. That person, who asked to remain nameless, provided *In These Times* with the following inside report:

The entire meeting had the familiar ring of a pep rally for industry attendees, who had come to learn how to defend chlorine in the media and sell their ideas to state and federal policy-makers.

The "Chlorine Chemistry Champions," as they are called, have an objective that they are going for. It was just, "How do we present our argument?" Their goal is to ensure that we have a strong, healthy chlorine chemistry industry. It didn't seem to be a question of, "Was there a problem?" or "Were there health threats?"

Throughout the message-development session it was all talk about public opinion, and where we have public opinion on our side, and where we don't. And, "How do we frame a message that will sell well?"

A speaker from the public opinion research firm Charlton Research Co. pointed out that if chlorine is seen as the creator of dioxin, then 62 percent of informed citizens say, "Get rid of it." The public also favors the EPA position to "prohibit, reduce and substitute" materials that produced dioxin.

We were told that we shouldn't talk about reducing or substituting, but that we should portray the EPA plan as an inflexible ban. The "Chlorine Champions" communications program would use the public distrust of government and regulations to get this message across. We were told to make sure to draw the connection between the environmentalists, the EPA and the government—to talk about them as one group—and to emphasize that once again the government is trying to restrict and kill jobs.

Paige McMahon, the Chlorine Chemistry Council communications director, pointed out that public opinion polls show that environmental issues are currently not on the radar screen. She added that the industry had benefited from the "generally balanced" media coverage of the EPA's dioxin reassessment, especially in the *Washington Post*.

The speakers also acknowledged that industry is vulnerable to being regulated because "dioxin can go in any direction" as a public relations issue. People don't have a bad idea of chlorine, but they do about dioxin. We were cautioned "to downplay the connection."

We were also warned that the chlorine customers are very concerned about chlorinated hydrocarbons that contaminate the environment and act as estrogen mimickers that disrupt the body's glandular system. We were advised to respond to questions with long-term scientific predictions—10 years in the future—that cannot be verified. They said *USA Today* in particular cannot resist such predictions. And they advised, "If you ever come across research that is negative just talk about the need to do more research and study the issue."

To counter any anti-chlorine movement, the council mapped out a grass-roots outreach plan that includes a database of 35,000 "down-



stream" users of chlorine—farmers who use organochlorine pesticides, local water authorities, hospital officials, etc. This database would be broken down into type of user and legislative districts. They would then do phone calls to identify chlorine "champion" activists and assign them to jobs as spokespeople, media reps, to do plant tours, etc.

Finally, we were advised to anticipate chlorine-related issues that might soon appear on the horizon. These included ozone-layer depletion, breast cancer and, somewhat cryptically, "chemical AIDS"—the idea that chlorinated compounds are contributing to the deterioration of human immune systems.

During a recent interview about the Greenpeace report, Bill Carroll, the Chlorine Chemistry Council's main spokesperson, appeared to stick closely to the PR guidelines set out at last fall's meeting.

Carroll began with a blatant mischaracterization of the Greenpeace report. "What they attempted to lead you to believe with their report," Carroll said, "is that there is a huge exposure to dioxin from [actual PVC products] and it just isn't true." But the Greenpeace report clearly emphasizes that PVC products themselves contain negligible amounts of dioxin. Instead, it is the incineration of industrial, municipal and hospital wastes that contain chlorine compounds—like PVC—that create the bulk of the dioxin released into the environment.

Carroll summed up the council's argument this way: "What Greenpeace says is that PVC is the largest source of dioxin in the environment. If that is true, how is it that the production of PVC has increased by a factor of three over the last 20 years, while dioxin in the environment has been falling by 30 percent?"

That would be a compelling argument if it were true. But it's not. PVC production has increased, and so has the amount of dioxin in the environment. Further, any slight improvement in the dioxin situation can be traced to environmental controls—controls vigorously opposed by the chemical industry—on dioxin-contaminated products like Agent Orange, which was once widely used to kill plants along highways and under power lines.

Carroll pulled out all stops when I asked him about the growing public health concern that estrogen mimickers—of which dioxin is one—were leading to lower sperm counts in men. He touted dioxin's potential public health benefits.

"There is at least one patent that exists for a [type of] dioxin as a therapeutic agent," said Carroll. "And in terms of estrogenic activities, first of all that is a relatively new study. Second,

the discussion of estrogenic properties is a far more generic discussion of chemicals in general rather than chlorinated materials."

Carroll is wrong once again. First, studies of the harmful effects of estrogen mimickers—and there are many studies—are not that new. Second, while a few heavy metals do act as estrogen mimickers, it is pollution from chlorine-rich substances like PCBs and many common pesticides that researchers are most concerned about.

Rick Hind, the legislative director for Greenpeace's U.S. Toxics Campaign, takes exception to Carroll's claims. "It is scientifically indefensible and morally irresponsible for the Chlorine Chemistry Council to try to delude a reporter into believing that there is a significant decline in the amount of dioxin in the environment," Hind argued. "There are many areas in which they can try to divert the debate. But that doesn't get away from the facts: dioxin is in the environment; dioxin is in our bodies and already may be causing health effects; and any new addition to that will only worsen the problem." As Hind sees it, the danger posed by the use of industrial chlorine is similar to the health threat once posed by leaded gasoline. And just as lead in gasoline was phased out in 1988, so should many of the industrial uses of chlorine.

## THE ADVENTURES OF A HUGE MOUTH

by Peter Hannan



**MEXICO**

# PRI-posterous

*Mexicans  
are witnessing  
the strange  
death of  
politics as  
usual.*

By Leon Lazaroff  
MEXICO CITY

**I**n Mexico, hardly a day seems to go by without the arrival of yet another spectacular breaking story, an agonizing economic blunder or a Big Arrest. Last month's abortive attempt to capture Zapatista leader Subcomandante Marcos was driven from the front pages by demands that Mexico put up oil revenues as collateral for the U.S.-led \$50 billion bailout. A few days later, a second gunman was suddenly located in last year's unsolved murder of presidential candidate Luis Donaldo Colosio.

But few events since the heady days of the Zapatista uprising 14 months ago could have prepared Mexicans for the sensational arrest on February 28 of Raúl Salinas, the former president's brother, on charges that he ordered the September murder of José Francisco Ruiz Massieu, the

No. 2 man in the ruling Institutional Revolutionary Party (PRI) and, in a soap-opera twist, a former brother-in-law of the Salinas brothers.

Even when compared to the roller-coaster year of 1994, Mexico is living through a political tempest that is bound to forever change how politics, labor and business are conducted in this country. What all this means for Mexico's largely corrupt political and economic elite is still hard to tell. Mexico watchers should not easily forget that the Mexican Revolution was at root a bourgeois rebellion ultimately won by the landed classes. The peasants of the pre-1917 era remain the peasants of the present. And any change that results from the current crisis may augur no better for their future.

Nonetheless, politics being what it is, there is much talk in the air of the old Mexican political system coming to an end. President Ernesto Zedillo Ponce de León's startling decision to arrest Carlos Salinas' older brother is a remarkable turning point in a political system where dissension within the ruling party has been kept from the public eye, and

the political elite is all but untouchable.

By charging Raúl with murder, and suggesting that the former president had prior knowledge of the crime, Zedillo has broken one of the cardinal rules of the Mexican political system: that standing presidents don't go after former chief executives, or those close to them, no matter how heinous the crime. But Zedillo has done just that. In the process, the Salinas arrest has given his aimless presidency the direction it so obviously had been lacking since he took office December 1. If respect is won through fear, Zedillo may finally be winning public support and the awe of his political opponents.

"This certainly strengthens Zedillo's public support, but it weakens his own party," said Juan Molinar, a political scientist at the Colegio de Mexico, a private university in Mexico City. "Zedillo must find a way to govern with just one part of the ruling party under his control. That is a big risk."

But while Zedillo's attack on Salinas has arguably strengthened his hand, the arrest has also shaken the very foundations of the PRI, putting Zedillo in a vulnerable position. As Octavio Paz has noted, Mexico is comprised of many regional cliques and mafias where political bosses and rural strongmen maintain a social order that provides them with lucrative kickbacks and cheap labor. These people, the heart and soul of the modern PRI, see unprecedented threats to their power both from Zedillo and from forces outside the party.

Raúl Salinas, 48, was a good friend of many old guard politicians, especially in the booming industrial city of Monterrey. A portly man, Salinas was infamous for flaunting the



power that naturally comes from being a president's sibling. Throughout the past six years, Raúl was said to be using public funds for his own business deals, forcing downtown Monterrey residents to sell him their land, and traveling with the high-society drug-running set. If nothing else, the elder Salinas was the prototypical "old guard" reactionary,

Like much of Mexican politics, which operates in whispers and dark spaces, it is hard to know what Zedillo's ultimate aims may be. "Is this [arrest] a means to establish an authoritarian presidency like that of Salinas, or is it to create genuine political and economic change?" asked Adolfo Aguilar Zinser, a former aide to Cuauhtémoc Cárdenas, the 1994 presidential candidate for the center-left Democratic Revolutionary Party (PRD). "We don't know how Zedillo will decide to use his power." As a man with no political experience or track record, Zedillo remains largely an unknown.

Certainly, any attempts to institute judicial or police reform, Zedillo's leading campaign promises, carry little weight if the executive is perceived to be powerless. And the Salinas arrest could bolster Zedillo's standing. But resistance will be heavy. Already, the badly burned Salinas has made it clear he will fight for his imprisoned brother, and for his own name.

Since the peso began plummeting in mid-December, Zedillo has put blame for the economic crisis squarely on his predecessor. Breaking yet another unwritten rule—that former chief executives don't criticize a standing president—Salinas swung back. Within hours of learning that his brother had been arrested, Salinas called Jacobo Zabludovsky, the Televisa anchor and infamous government lackey, demanding to go on national television. Zabludovsky granted the request, and Salinas charged that the current economic crisis was not the responsibility of his administration but due to "mistakes" made by Zedillo's team. During the interview, Salinas

made no mention of his brother's ordeal, and Zabludovsky, of course, didn't ask him.

The following day, Salinas dejectedly withdrew his already bruised candidacy for president of the World Trade Organization, and angrily called the charges against his brother "unbelievable and absurd." In a bizarre twist, Salinas then began—and quickly ended—a hunger strike in an attempt to restore his reputation.

The infighting between Zedillo and Salinas clearly indicates that the delicate but corrupt civilities of the past are being thrown into the garbage. "All the rules are breaking," said Juan José Rodríguez Prats, a former PRI deputy who quit the party a year ago, charging that leaders were blocking internal reform. "This is not orthodox Mexican politics, but a historic struggle within the country's political system."

In its 65 years of ironclad rule, the PRI has served more as a vehicle for labor and social control than an actual working political party. Many refer to the PRI as the election arm of the government, unveiled every six years to maintain power. Since 1929, the PRI has repeatedly demon-



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#### Zapatista rebels in Chiapas.

a friendly comrade of those old-time politicians who remain loyal to the former president for having handed them jobs as governors and other cushy positions.

Salinas was known as the steward for congressman Manuel Muñoz Rocha, the man initially charged with planning the murder of Ruiz Massieu. Muñoz Rocha remains a fugitive, although many assume he has been killed. While the government is mum about a motive for the Ruiz Massieu killing, most believe the murder was a result of a power struggle within the PRI.

For Zedillo, these people represent a roadblock to his own political power—not for ideological reasons, but because hundreds of officeholders and party bosses remain loyal to Salinas, or are unsure about the new president. By going after Raúl Salinas, Zedillo has all but declared war on the party's old guard. In turn, he has given support to the so-called reformers, technocratic pragmatists still unable to recognize that the party must democratize just itself enough to retain power.

## Rebels with a cause

**E**ven as Blackhawk helicopters sweep over the thick mountain brush of Chiapas and the well-armed Mexican military pushes further east into the Lacandon jungle, the Zapatista rebels remain confident that they can outrun the army and ultimately force the government to make important economic and political concessions.

While holding none of the military's firepower, the Zapatistas continue to retain wide public support, easily their most powerful weapon. In Salvador Allende, a village of just 37 people located about 50 miles from the Guatemalan border, Sebastián Jimenez Clara, a poor farmer, said that the Zapatistas are strongly supported by the Lacandon Indians who fashion a subsistence life growing coffee and corn. With just seven thatched-roof huts near a river stream that has no name, the tiny village of Salvador Allende, home to six families that share 200 hectares of land, is one of hundreds of nearly forgotten settlements strewn throughout Chiapas. "We don't condemn the Zapatistas," said Jimenez, who stood and spoke before a group of 10 other men in a room lit by candlelight. "The government has never had interest in us, in the poor of Chiapas. These people [the Zapatistas] are struggling for the same things we are."

The latest phase of the 14-month-old conflict began on February 9, when President Ernesto Zedillo Ponce de León—pressured by an ever-nervous investment community and a military reportedly talking coup—ordered the army to capture rebel leader Subcomandante Marcos and take over Zapatista towns, beginning with Guadalupe Tepeyac, the rebel headquarters and site of August's National Democracy Convention, a conclave of Mexico's center and left opposition forces. (See *ITT*, Sept. 5.) In response, the Indians have evacuated their tiny villages while the Zapatistas themselves have broken into smaller groups and moved into the sparsely populated Montes Azules reserve.

As Mexican politics in the past month have gone from the bellicose to the bizarre, the Chiapas conflict remains in a stalemate. The government refuses to negotiate until the rebels lay down their arms, and the Zapatistas refuse to talk until the military withdraws to the positions held prior to February 9. Neither side is likely to budge. In the past month, isolated confrontations have left a handful of Zapatistas dead, along with one military colonel who was killed by sniper fire the day after Zedillo ordered the military into jungle territory previously held by the guerrillas. The government is insisting that the military is on a peace mission, and has been highly respectful of human rights. But numerous reports of soldiers beating and threatening campesinos in towns known to support the Zapatistas have slowly been filtering out of a region largely cut off from outside contact.

Zedillo is approaching the Zapatistas more as a political puzzle than a real-life social problem. He has attempted to undermine the rebel movement by portraying it as little more than the lark of a former communications professor named Rafael Sebastián Guillén Vicente, playing at revolution as the mysterious Subcomandante Marcos. Tactically, Zedillo has chosen to place the conflict in terms of the government vs. the rebels, conveniently forgetting the group at the root of this deeply symbolic social conflict, the state's rich and exploitative landowners.

On two occasions in February, Chiapas' white ruling class, known by the Spanish term *coletos*, hired thugs to attack more than a 100 poor Indians gathered outside the main cathedral in San Cristóbal de las Casas. An effigy of the liberation theologian Bishop Samuel Ruiz García, widely hated by the *coletos*, was burned outside the church. No arrests were made for these ugly events, proving what all Mexicans know too well: rich Mexicans live with an impunity unparalleled in most of the Americas.

And indeed, the Zapatistas continue to live in the jungle in no small part through the support of some of the poorest people in the country. As night fell recently in Pichucalco, some 30 Zapatista troops were joined by half as many women carrying backpacks filled with food and cooking supplies. His face covered in a brown cloth mask revealing only his eyes, a rebel named Miguel said the rebels can exist for months living on the run with the help of Lacandon villagers. Speaking in a simple Spanish that made obvious it is not his first language, Miguel reiterated the rebels' demand that the government withdraw its troops before negotiations can resume. "We will not lay down our arms just because they agree to talk," he said. "This weapon is the only way we can make demands to this government."

—L.L.

strated an uncanny ability to evolve just enough to assuage public criticism without jeopardizing its control of the country's political system.

In the coming months, Zedillo must govern a society increasingly frustrated and embarrassed by a government that appears out of control, unable to stabilize the economy or deal honestly with the Zapatista rebels. Unlike past years, this anger has coalesced at a time of severe economic crisis, offering a unique unifying event for all Mexicans. So far, the conservative National Action Party (PAN) has been better poised to take advantage of this anger than its leftist counterparts in the PRD. The PAN's February victory for governor of Jalisco, home to Guadalajara, was the largest defeat in PRI history, and delivered notice nationwide that political alternatives exist. Lacking articulate leaders or a focused program, the PRD has been left stumbling.

Despite the PAN's triumph in Jalisco, the PRI is far from dead. While Zedillo's attack on the Salinas crowd has sent the party into unprecedented disarray, the PRI continues to hold all but four of Mexico's 31 statehouses, and both houses of the national legislature. The conservatives' tightfisted domination of labor unions and campesino organizations also seems secure at the moment.

Nonetheless, the PRI itself is unlikely to exit this crisis of confidence as it entered. With the economy in a tailspin and the Zapatistas on the run, the public has more than enough reason to demand a final end to authoritarian politics. "This is the beginning of the end," surmised Molinar. "The ruling party is in disarray, in a state of warfare, unlike we have seen in all its 65 years. Mexico is at a crossroads."

Leon Lazaroff is a freelance writer living in Mexico City.



**POLITICS**

# Affirmative action, R.I.P.

*The program's original purpose—to help compensate African-Americans for slavery's racist legacy—was abandoned years ago.*

By Salim Muwakkil

**A**ffirmative action, as we have known it, is probably dead. Good riddance. For the past quarter of a century, many blacks have looked to affirmative action, despite its shortcomings, as a symbol of America's long-denied promise of racial equity.

But its original purpose, as a means to help compensate African-Americans for slavery and its racist legacy, has long since been lost. With affirmative action's racial aspects toned down for the consumption of white voters, it has become less a hand-up for poor blacks than a stepladder to the middle class for many white American families. The policy is disingenuous, black conservative Shelby Steele wrote in a recent *New York Times* op-ed column, because "middle-class white women have benefited from it far more than any other group, and

46 percent of all black children live in poverty." Steele is correct, but for the wrong reasons. His purpose is to discredit the notion of preferential treatment; his insight is that affirmative action has served the wrong people. The original purpose of affirmative action policies was to chip away at race-specific disparities between black and white Americans. But according to most studies, as Steele noted in his column, the major beneficiaries of these policies have been white women.

This increasing feminization of the workplace has provided many white couples with two incomes. So although preferential policies did help enlarge the black middle class, according to studies by sociologist Bart Landry, wealth disparities between blacks and whites remained virtually the same. After a brief gain in economic status during the late '60s and early '70s, African-Americans have been on a steady downward slide.

Steele concludes that affirmative action "has always been what might be called iconographic public policy—policy that ostensibly exists to solve a social problem but actually functions as an icon for the self-image people hope to gain by supporting the policy."

By de-emphasizing affirmative action's racial aspects, liberals succeeded in making the programs more palatable but less effective. The raging right-wingers who have seized control of Congress have no intention of making it either more effective or more palatable; they have targeted it for death.

Since the argument for race-specific policies has yet to be made, these policies are extremely vulnerable. Signs of this vulnerability are everywhere.

Sen. Jesse Helms (R-NC) introduced a bill to eliminate all federal affirmative action programs. He said such programs "have done more to harm good race relations, and have been exceedingly costly to the American taxpayers."

Senate Majority Leader Bob Dole of Kansas requested a compilation of federal programs that include racial preferences in what insiders say will be a hit list of programs targeted by GOP advocates of "color blind" policies.

House Speaker Newt Gingrich reportedly is designing a post-contract agenda that lists affirmative action as public enemy number one.

And Republican presidential candidate Sen. Phil Gramm of Texas has pledged that one of his first acts as president would be to issue an executive order abolishing federal affirmative action programs.

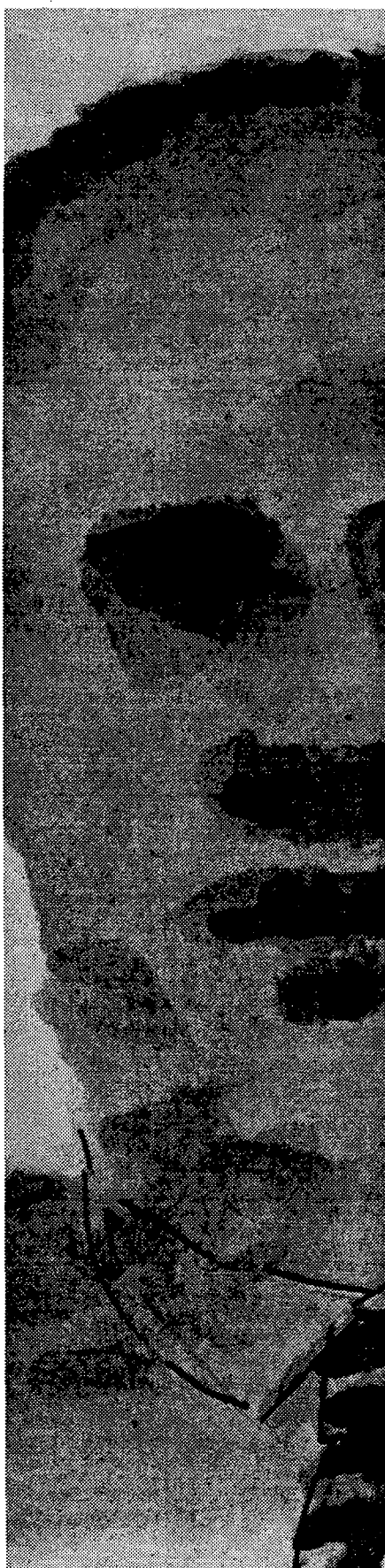
The anti-affirmative action campaign has trickled down to the state level as well. Californians are likely to vote next year on an initiative to ban racial preferences in employment and education. The "Civil Rights Initiative," as it is called, is

expected to generate enormous popular support for its Republican sponsors and to hamper President Bill Clinton's chances of carrying California in the 1996 elections.

Since the days of the Reagan administration, conservative Republicans have been taking potshots at the very idea of affirmative action. For them, the beneficial effects of affirmative action on white women are less an issue than its preferential treatment of black people. And so criticism of the concept has focused on its unfair racial preferences.

The notion of legislative recompense for racial injustice was never wildly popular in a land so steeped in traditions of white supremacy, but national leaders 30 years ago at least understood the need for compensatory justice. Of course, their motives were not entirely pure.

During the '60s, when federal programs were first designed to "take affirmative action to overcome the effects of prior discrimination," American cities were going up in smoke. From 1964 to 1969, some 65 U.S. cities exploded in violent upheavals. Aside from the toll in lives and property, the situation was bad for business. Studies assessing the violence found that racist hiring policies had been a precipitating factor. Affirmative action was born in that smoke-



charred climate.

The policy's Democratic architects were praised for devising a relatively innocuous way to redistribute some of the United States' maldistributed wealth. Support for the policies was bipartisan; during a time of economic expansion, most Americans thought the measures deserved a try.

Moreover, there were clear successes. In *The New Black Middle Class*, sociologist Bart Landry notes that before 1960, the black middle class represented barely 13 percent of all black workers. In one decade that number more than doubled. Landry, like many other analysts, attributes much of that jump to affirmative action policies. Although the numbers have been falling since the early '70s, the black middle class still comprised nearly one-third of all workers in 1994.

If affirmative action policies are reversed, many analysts believe, these numbers will drop precipitously. But the tactic of using preferential treatment to remedy past injustices has lost such credibility that many of its former Democratic champions have joined in the attack. It's a mercy killing, they say.

In what may be a preview of things to come, lawmakers voted 381 to 44 to scuttle a program that encourages minority ownership of broadcasting systems. The unanimous Republican opposition was joined by 154 Democrats. Black and Hispanic lawmakers were joined by seven white Democrats in support of the measure.

Acutely conscious of this turn in the public mood, the Clinton administration has empaneled a group to review all governmental anti-discrimination programs. As if to emphasize this new approach, the Clinton Justice Department recently charged an Illinois university with discriminating against white men in its hiring of janitorial workers.

But Clinton also plans more sweeping changes that, according to knowledgeable insiders, will recast anti-discrimination programs on the basis of economic status rather than race or gender.

With this shift, Clinton certainly will be responding to what seems to be the fervent public distaste for these policies. But he'll also be returning to his centrist, New Democratic roots. The Progressive Policy Institute, the policy arm of the centrist Democratic Leadership Council, has long pushed the idea of "means-testing" affirmative action—that is, denying the program's benefits to those (even minorities) whose income is above a certain level.

"Means-testing is not my option," said Rep. Kweisi Mfume (D-MD) former chairman of the Congressional Black Caucus (CBC), in a curt response to questions about the president's anticipated shift. Mfume is heading a CBC task force on affirmative action. Such programs "still remain a bridge over troubled waters for the people of this nation who seek equal access and

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equal opportunity," he said.

The Rev. Jesse Jackson, president of the National Rainbow Coalition, has been scathing in his criticism of Democrats—who, he suggests, have been overly intimidated by the Republican sweep last November. "We should not abandon our principles and become 'Demo-publicans' and jump on the train," Jackson said, following a meeting of civil rights advocates gathered to fight the increasing attacks on affirmative action programs. Jackson argued that Clinton should call a special meeting of his Equal Employment Opportunity chairman and other compliance officials before making a review of anti-discrimination policies.

Jackson ridiculed the Clinton administration's announced review of affirmative action programs as an ineffectual sop to the conservative opposition. "This really is no time to be picking panels. We need bold and clear leadership to relieve America of its unfounded fears."

Jackson, who has adopted his own

kind of "race-neutralism," argues that critics of affirmative action have failed to acknowledge the clearly beneficial effect the policies have had for women. "White women's voices have basically been ignored, there's been such an attempt to make this a black and white thing," he said. "When the women's factor is added, it changes the equation. ... That's the majority."

Jackson's emphasis on the benefits of affirmative action to women is a tactical move, designed to outflank those who are targeting racial preferences. But it's also an evasion of the crucial issue. The concept of affirmative action essentially is a euphemism for reparations, and this point is lost when its advocates urge its expansion across race lines. African-Americans were deeply damaged by the institution of slavery; indeed, they were created by slavery.

Until this society understands the need to devote itself to repairing that damage, it seems certain that we will continue to drift from crisis to crisis, until we reach one too many. ◀



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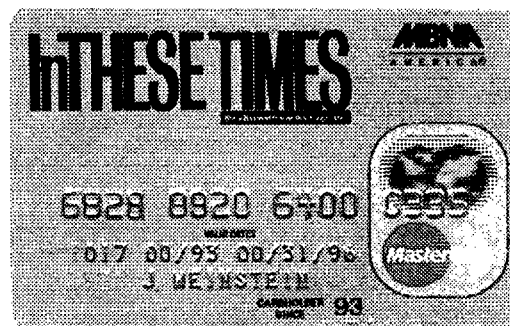
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**L A B O R**

# Twilight of the idle

# W

*Dumping Lane Kirkland is the difficult first step in reviving the American labor movement.*

By David Moberg  
BAL HARBOUR, FLA.

With grim mien, members of the AFL-CIO executive council strode out of their annual winter meeting, even less willing than usual to talk about what had just transpired. It had been a frank, often bitter discussion, lasting nearly five hours and, in a rare departure, conducted among the 35 labor leaders without any staff present.

This special session of organized labor's top officials had been called in response to rumblings of discontent that surfaced in the press before the late February meetings. There was a growing sentiment, bolstered by anxiety about Republican control of Congress, that the labor movement was in an extraordinary crisis and that AFL-CIO President Lane Kirkland was no longer the man to lead America's loose federation of unions.

Though focused on Kirk-

land, the emotion-charged meeting was a freewheeling discussion of problems besetting labor. What is remarkable is not that the meeting occurred but that it was so long in coming. Although Kirkland has long supported the work of a special committee to evaluate how unions should respond to changing conditions that started in the early '80s, for many years he has also denied that labor suffered any serious internal problems. Even at the February meeting, he proclaimed that the U.S. labor movement "is the strongest and most effective and the most solid free trade union movement in the entire world."

This painful self-delusion is part of what has led to the steady decline of union influence: despite a slight growth in absolute numbers over the last two years, the relative strength of unions continued to slip to 15.5 percent of the total workforce and only 10.6 percent of the private sector. Labor's political and legislative clout have declined in tandem. In

one sign of fading effectiveness, Republican union members turned out to the polls in much greater force than Democratic members last fall.

Workers may not feel especially hostile toward unions (roughly a third of the general public feels positive and a third negative about unions), but they increasingly see unions as irrelevant. According to "Being Heard," a report prepared for the AFL-CIO by the public relations consultants Greer, Margolis, Mitchell, Burns and Associates, many workers, including 57 percent of low-income workers, say they are experiencing "hard times" and presumably are ripe for organizing. But, the report concludes, "it literally did not occur to them to look toward unions as a solution to their problems."

Clearly these failings are not simply Lane Kirkland's fault. Compared to his crusty predecessor, George Meany, Kirkland has been an innovative reformer. He has joined picket lines—which Meany proudly refused to do—and submitted to symbolic arrests. He called a massive Solidarity Day rally in 1981 as a rebuke to Ronald Reagan. He brought into the AFL-CIO the Auto Workers, Mine Workers and Teamsters, although he was unwilling to press the Teamsters to first clean up their union. He has pressed unions to become active in their state and local federations, which could be important if these bodies also become less conservative and bureaucratic. He tried to fashion political unity in presidential primaries, but did not succeed in increasing labor's clout.

Although they were not always his ideas, he supported establishing several new, somewhat autonomous bodies within the AFL-CIO. The Labor Institute for Public Affairs



promotes labor's public image through television and advertising. The Union Privilege Program offers credit cards and other benefits to union members. And the Organizing Institute has won widespread plaudits for training and recruiting union organizers.

Yet at the same time, Kirkland and close aides have in the past seemed more preoccupied by international affairs—especially Cold War politics—than labor's domestic crisis. Indeed, Kirkland's most spirited press conference comment at Bal Harbour was a patently misleading defense of the AFL-CIO's overseas institutes as free of any Cold War political motivations. While, with the Cold War over, there is a consensus that international labor rights should be promoted, no strategy has been devised for doing so.

Under Kirkland the AFL-CIO has remained deeply obsessed with protocol and following proper channels—fighting over the arrangement of the deck chairs on labor's Titanic. For example, there have been frequent complaints

of AFL-CIO staffers trying to undermine the innovative and promising Jobs With Justice movement, declaring it a kind of “dual unionism” because it promoted worker solidarity and militant actions outside established structures.

Although its attitude toward cooperation among unions is improving, the AFL-CIO has not been a sufficiently enthusiastic participant in coalitions. In the eyes of its partners, the federation often insists on dictating the terms of cooperation. Organizers in the campaign against NAFTA complained early on at the lack of AFL-CIO participation. They argued that it was the vigorous activism of local unions and allied groups around the country that eventually pushed the AFL-CIO to take part in this major grass-roots political mobilization. On the other hand, despite a groundswell of support within the labor movement for a single-payer health plan model, Kirkland effectively led the fight for a more moderate alternative, thus weakening one of the most important liberal causes of this decade.

The Industrial Union Department, with scant support from Kirkland, took on the task of building coalitions and mobilizing grass-roots support for the legislation to ban permanent replacement of strikers. Indeed, last June, when the debate on this crucial labor legislation entered its final, fateful days in the Senate, Lane Kirkland was neither leading mass demonstrations nor lobbying Congress. He was in Europe, attending an anniversary meeting of the International Labor Organization. It was yet another sign, as one union official sarcastically remarked, that Kirkland had already retired.

No one at the special executive council meeting specifically asked Kirkland to step down when his term expires this fall, but that was clearly the hope of the leaders of nine big unions, including the Auto Workers, the Teamsters, the Machinists, the SEIU and AFSCME. This is no insignificant faction, comprising more than 40 percent of the labor federation's members. Ambitious council members had in years past hinted that they would like to succeed Kirkland, but this year was different. The grumbling reflected a lack of confidence in the 72-year-old Kirkland, who has held the post since 1979.

Indeed, Kirkland's critics were united mainly in their desire for “change,” but were reluctant to name a challenger or lay out an alternative program for fear of dividing themselves. “People who want Lane to go have a problem,” observed American Federation of Teachers President Albert Shanker. “They don't have a candidate. You can't beat something with nothing.”

The forces for change hope that Kirkland will cooperate and step down, permitting 66-year-old AFL-CIO secretary-treasurer Thomas Donahue to assume a caretaker presidency for one or two terms. Kirkland said he would announce his decision “in the fullness of time,” but the betting ran



heavily that he would decide to leave.

In an attempt to ease him out, there was even serious talk about creating a new position of AFL-CIO international president, which would permit Kirkland to attend to his beloved foreign affairs and leave domestic matters to someone else. For now, critics are biding their time, waiting to see what develops. Because the AFL-CIO president has virtually no power to command member unions to do anything, he must be able to exploit diplomacy, loyalty, bluster or other resources to keep the troops together. With such a large expression of "no confidence," Kirkland's effectiveness is further undermined. But he is also an obstinate and proud man, often acting with disdain toward not only the press but also other labor leaders, and this could lead him to run again.

Kirkland's critics wanted to avoid inflicting pain on the organization or on Kirkland, but Teamsters President Ron Carey said that if the leadership issue is not resolved internally, "what must happen will happen." That would mean an open contest at the convention. No one has thrown his or her hat into the ring, but the names of Mine Workers President Richard Trumka and Machinists President George Kourpias are often mentioned. Trumka is young, aggressive and a forceful public speaker, but his union is small and dwindling and some of his older colleagues belittle him. Kourpias is a more quietly progressive leader of another declining union but might be less controversial than Trumka.

Gerald McEntee, president of the fast-growing public employee union, AFSCME, says he is not interested in the AFL-CIO presidency though he and Service Employees Union President John Sweeney were key leaders among Kirkland critics. Sweeney, whose union is one of the few to organize and grow successfully in recent years, seems committed to his old friend, Donahue.

Although Donahue's defenders argue that he is more innovative and receptive to changes than Kirkland and certainly more willing to speak out publicly, he is also a Kirkland loyalist and largely cut of the same cloth—a longtime AFL-CIO staff person who was a top aide to Meany.

Much of the criticism directed toward Kirkland concerns his public image. With an often world-weary tone, he speaks in a florid literary style graced by a dry wit. His remarks come across badly on television and probably don't connect well with most workers. While his insistence on a historical perspective is admirable, he projects little passion or urgency. In press conferences he delivers rambling, indirect answers and rarely focuses clearly on his message. For example, he offhandedly mentioned a new campaign to "stand up for working people" but provided little information about it or any sense that it would go beyond the usual ritual behavior. His ideas reflect a class-conscious economic

populism that is all too rare in American politics, but his style is anything but populist.

In response to such criticisms, Kirkland responded in the closed sessions that he found television talk shows "demeaning" and refused to appear on them. He argued that charismatic leaders have in the past done much to damage the cause of labor. Uneasy public reaction to the likes of Mine Workers President John L. Lewis and Teamsters President Jimmy Hoffa, in Kirkland's view, led to the passage of post-World War II legislation that restricted unions.

But his friends as well as his critics agree that labor clearly

needs a stronger, more positive image. Describing him as "brilliant," Shanker acknowledged that Kirkland's press conferences "are not inspirational." If, as a 1991 Labor Research Association poll shows, only 3 percent of Americans can identify Lane Kirkland as the AFL-CIO leader, clearly the majority of union members don't know their chief spokesperson.

The problems are more than skin—or media image—

deep, but Kirkland's critics have only begun to lay out an alternative to his agenda. While Teamsters President Ron Carey insisted that the discussion "was about the future of the labor movement in this country, not [Kirkland] or Tom Donahue," Carey also argued that "we need more firepower, more inspiration. We need a more visible approach, people out there with fire in the gut. Lane has said clearly he doesn't want to do that."

Beyond that leadership role, however, Carey argued the debate "was about new ideas, more democratic debate, more organizing at the grass roots. ... It's about a political strategy that doesn't depend on one party or one politician; we're tired of being taken for granted. It's about more organizing at the grass roots, looking at campaigns like our Campaign for an America That Works [a coalition with Ralph Nader and several liberal groups]. Labor can't do it alone. It has to reach out to other groups."

Much of the discontent focuses on politics. "We contributed \$5.5 million in the last election cycle, and what did it get us?" asked Steelworkers spokesman Gary Hubbard. "We'd be better off marshaling our own resources, organizing our own grass-roots structures." Kirkland dismissed talk "on the fringes" of a labor party, saying that labor already had a party—COPE, or the Committee on Political Education. But comparing the effectiveness of the Christian Coalition among Republicans with that of COPE among Democrats gives some idea of how weak labor has become, in part because it no longer mounts a strong grass-roots effort.

There is a widespread sentiment that something new and different is needed. Teachers union president Shanker, while

***As AFL-CIO president, Lane Kirkland has been both uninspired and uninspiring. But labor's malaise is more than just a matter of style.***

arguing that labor did not have the muscle to create its own party, suggested that labor could be an ally with others in a new party and that a period of flux with more than two parties seemed possible. Oil, Chemical and Atomic Workers President Robert Wages, who wants Kirkland to step down, argued that the Democrats and labor were both losing because labor has not independently developed its own political agenda. Labor is at once far too "reactive," he said, and too unwilling to deal with the appeal of right-wing social issues—such as gun control—to a large bloc of union members.

Kirkland critics want the AFL-CIO to play a more important role in organizing. Sweeney, for example, wants the federation to devote 30 percent of its budget to organizing (as his union does), not the roughly 5 percent now allocated. While individual unions carry primary organizing responsibilities, the AFL-CIO could devote far more to projects like the Organizing Institute. Last year, the institute trained about 700 organizers in its three-day session and another 115 in its more rigorous field program, but there were demands from unions for 257 more organizers than they were able to train.

That is just a start. At the current rate of organizing, even if labor won every union election (and it now wins just over half) and got a contract in each case (and now it fails to do so one third of the time), the percentage of the workforce represented by unions would continue to fall, according to the Labor Research Association. Labor academics Richard Freeman and Joel Rogers calculate that unions would have to spend \$350 million more each year simply to hold their own.

Obviously, increasing effort and overcoming internal barriers will not be enough. The legal obstacles must also be reduced. Yet as Rutgers University law professor James Pope recently argued, labor law is likely to be changed only after there has been an upsurge in the labor movement. However, the law inhibits such an upsurge. The escape from this conundrum, he argues, involves union members' willingness to "defy ... unconstitutional statutes and judicial edicts" as they peacefully engage in collective action. The Mine Workers' Pittston strike was such a bold effort.

If the labor movement can make "workers' rights" the '90s equivalent of '60s civil rights, then it can reclaim the moral high ground and public support necessary to organize, change labor law and turn around its political fortunes. In one small sign of the potential for this change, the Organizing Institute, an independent educational group funded in part by the AFL-CIO, is this month conducting its first training session in civil disobedience.

New strategies for organizing and political action are not likely to succeed, however, without another fundamental change that only a few union leaders seem ready to promote. The "Being Heard" report emphasized strongly that the American public supports "working people"—and believes they need more influence—far more than they support unions.

The public sees union leaders as out of touch and as largely telling members what to do—a view held most strongly by those most familiar with unions. Indeed, while the Greer group identifies blacks, low-income people, women and young people as most responsive to union appeals, non-union blue-collar men are resistant, partly because of bad experiences with unions.

"This sense that unions are not fully democratic institutions, and are not truly accountable to their members, is one of the greatest problems faced by the labor movement today," the Greer group concluded.

It is a problem not just of image but of reality. A post-Kirkland labor leadership, if it is to make any difference, must encourage greater internal democracy (including direct rank-and-file election of all major union officials), education and "reorganizing" of existing members, and mobilization of members for organizing, politics and support of other unions. The greatest potential strength of organized labor, its own members, lies largely untapped, in part out of a fear that an ardently revitalized rank and file could be hard to control.

The internal obstacles to change must be swept away in favor of a more open, responsive democracy. As Elaine Bernard, director of the Harvard Trade Union Program, notes, conventions of the Canadian Labor Congress (the counterpart to the AFL-CIO) are filled with rank-and-file elected delegates who are not afraid to debate openly and who have contested elections for top officers. But the AFL-CIO leadership, despite the breakthrough debate at this past Executive Council meeting, still thinks that all important questions must be quietly settled behind closed doors with minimal involvement of members.

The normal routine of Executive Council meetings—reports from political leaders and the Secretary of Labor and passage of resolutions—was quietly disrupted this year by the presence in the hallways of the Sheraton Bal Harbour of about 70 working men and women, mainly decked out in red T-shirts. They were members and local officers of the three unions involved in lengthy strikes or lockouts in Decatur, Ill., who wanted to ask the Executive Council for support and endorsement of a Solidarity Bank, a fund to help crucial labor struggles. Despite reluctance in some quarters, protocol was eventually bent. The local presidents were admitted to the meeting but were not allowed to speak; their national presidents spoke for them.

More intervention of this nature—which bring the urgency of real workers to labor's top brass—can only be healthy for labor's top body. These workers' experiences of corporate abuse serve not only to remind the Executive Council why it exists, but also make the most compelling case around which to rally support for the labor movement. If Lane Kirkland steps down, it will not be sufficient for someone else simply to step up. There must be new ways to help workers, like those from Decatur, come forward as the real face and the real force of the labor movement.

**E S P I O N A G E**

# Spying for dollars

*The CIA is  
finding a post-  
Cold War role  
as an errand  
boy for  
American  
businesses in  
search of  
industrial  
secrets.*

By Robert Dreyfuss

**P**amela Harriman, the American ambassador to France, sat glumly in the office of French Interior Minister Charles Pasqua in February while that country's chief police official read her the riot act. Harriman, whose chain of trophy marriages and benevolence toward the Democratic Party won her a place in President Clinton's diplomatic corps, would no doubt have rather been planning one of her oh-so-precious dinner parties instead of listening to Pasqua accuse the United States Central Intelligence Agency of industrial espionage.

According to an account of the meeting leaked to the Paris daily *Le Monde*, the French caught five Americans red-handed trying to bribe government and corporate officials into providing the CIA with classified information about French

technology and trade secrets. Among those targeted, *Le Monde* said, were a French member of parliament, an official in the French president's office, a ministry of communications official and a technician with France Telecom.

Within days of the *Le Monde* revelations, officials on both sides of the Atlantic were engaged in frantic efforts to sweep the affair under the carpet. But while Pasqua said that "It's abnormal that the secret service of a friendly power conducts spying that includes recruiting high officials to find out about French government policy," in fact, economic spying among former Cold War allies is commonplace. French Prime Minister Edouard Balladur acknowledged that France is as guilty as the United States on this score, commenting obliquely, "These things happen all the time on one side of the Atlantic or the other."

Like battleships turning at sea, the CIA and the rest of the U.S. intelligence community are ponderously shifting

their focus to new, post-Cold War targets—and those targets are more likely to be in Tokyo, Frankfurt and Mexico City than in Moscow and Havana.

The CIA is increasingly focusing on technology, trade policies and Third World debt. The CIA's primary list of customers—the U.S. government consumers of finished intelligence—has grown from the White House, the State Department and the Pentagon to include the departments of Commerce, Treasury, Energy, the Federal Reserve, and even the Environmental Protection Agency.

And more and more, the CIA, the FBI and other parts of the intelligence community are working hand in hand with U.S. Fortune 500 and high-tech "Third Wave" firms to spy on corporate and government officials overseas—and to thwart foreign economic espionage aimed at American companies. Call it "the New Cold War."

A telling episode in the New Cold War unfolded in Japan in 1989, just as the Soviet Union was starting to come apart at the seams, when a team of 13 CIA officers was discovered operating under so-called "nonofficial cover," or NOC. Unlike traditional CIA officers stationed under diplomatic cover in the U.S. embassy or in the military, NOC officers serve under business or commercial cover. With the cooperation of some of America's largest and best-known firms, the CIA spent much of the '80s setting up a network of highly skilled NOCs in Japan, where they busily began penetrating the Japanese industrial, research and commercial sectors, according to John Quinn, a former CIA NOC in Japan, and other retired U.S. intelligence officers.

But a series of clumsy CIA errors in Japan caused the entire cluster of NOCs in Tokyo to self-destruct. For exam-



ple, the CIA's embassy officers routinely took taxis from the embassy directly to meetings with the undercover NOCs and supplied them with communications equipment that was made in Japan. This sloppiness made it relatively easy for Japanese counterintelligence officers to spot and identify the 13 NOCs, according to a veteran CIA clandestine services officer. After dropping polite warnings to the CIA about the need to rein in the activities of "certain businessmen"—warnings the CIA duly ignored—Japan's Public Security Investigative Agency decided to play hardball. They hired thugs to bust up the homes and offices of the NOCs, causing the CIA in a panic to recall the entire team, withdrawing "assets" that had painstakingly been kept in place for as long as 15 years.

Though the Tokyo episode was a fiasco that unravelled a multimillion-dollar investment by the CIA, the Tokyo NOCs were soon replaced. In fact, the CIA currently maintains 110 nonofficial cover officers worldwide, a key part of the agency's economic intelligence apparatus. Over the years, some of the most familiar names in corporate America have secretly cooperated with the CIA to station NOCs in their offices in Japan, Western Europe and throughout the Third World: Sears Roebuck, Prentice-Hall, Campbell Soup, W.R. Grace, Procter & Gamble, RJR Nabisco and firms associated with Ross Perot and the late Malcolm Forbes. Unbeknownst to all but their highest executives, these companies and many more have collaborated with the CIA's effort to infiltrate business and commercial circles abroad.

The NOC program has been around since the CIA's earliest days, but it was under the reign of former Director William Casey that the agency expanded the use of NOCs directed at other nations' economies, along with intelligence directed at money-laundering, drug trafficking and terrorism. Asked about Casey's decision to expand the NOC program, Richard Kerr, former deputy director of the CIA, said, "Casey's view was that the world had changed a lot, and the kind of things we were interested in were economic."

The CIA in Tokyo frequently targeted particular Japanese companies for espionage, often recruiting paid agents within corporate hierarchies. According to a January 6 article in Japan's Kyodo News Service, the CIA has stationed 60 officers in Japan and spends thousands of dollars a month to pay informants in Japan's business and government circles. Among the CIA's targets in Japan, Kyodo reported, were Kyocera, Mitsubishi Heavy Industries, Dai Nippon Printing and the National Space Development Agency.

In the case of one Japanese high-tech firm involved in the automobile industry, said former CIA NOC Quinn, "They wanted to know the structure of the company inside, who were the bigwigs, who were their policy-makers, where was their R&D section, what was the R&D section working on, what was their budget, what were the critical technologies they were developing."

In the recent French scandal, one of the five American spies was a NOC, a woman posing as a public relations executive for a Dallas-based foundation. Able to move easily

in French commercial circles, she established initial contacts with targeted French officials and executives and passed on candidates for recruitment to other, more senior CIA operatives. According to *Le Monde*, the CIA has placed 80 CIA officials in France, of whom 30 operate under nonofficial cover.

The French-American spy flap erupted after several years of low-intensity conflict between the two nations' intelligence services. Beginning in the late '80s, several French secret service officials were expelled from the United States for allegedly spying on U.S. aerospace firms. Then, in 1993, the United States accused France of using the Paris Air Show as an opportunity to steal American technology and trade secrets. At the same time, Washington was angered by France's intransigence on certain pivotal aspects of the negotiations around the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT) and, later, by France's willingness to lift the economic embargo of Iraq.

What particularly angered the French, according to sources in the intelligence community, was the CIA's role in helping American companies to win multibillion-dollar aerospace and telecommunications contracts in Saudi Arabia and Brazil, at the expense of competing French companies.

And, according to a former U.S. intelligence officer, the prize in the current French-U.S. scandal was France Telecom's advanced ATM (asynchronous transfer mode) switching technology. France Telecom, the "AT&T" of France, reportedly possesses ATM capabilities significantly more powerful than those developed by AT&T, giving the French a leg up in the all-important race to equip the information superhighway.

Looming over all of the CIA's involvement in issues of trade and technology is the question of whether, when and how the CIA might come to the aid of American business. Former CIA Director Stansfield Turner and strategist Edward Luttwak of the Center for Strategic and International Studies, along with other advocates of CIA secret sharing, suggest a range of options. They stretch from filtering intelligence to the business community through the Commerce Department to, at the most extreme, providing detailed information about commercial contracts, bids and even stolen technology directly to U.S. corporations.

Many experts have ruled out the idea of mobilizing the CIA into the world of industrial espionage, even though many other nations—notably Japan, France and Israel, but also Russia and China—routinely do so. Former CIA Director R. James Woolsey repeatedly ruled out having the CIA engage in espionage for the benefit of the private sector.

But Woolsey's lawyerly denials are riddled with loopholes. In fact, the CIA has long had backchannel connections to private industry. Herb Meyer, who worked as special assistant to Casey and later served as vice chairman of the National Intelligence Council, said, "We've always managed to get intelligence to the business community. There is contact between business people and the

## Trade secrets

As the CIA's industrial espionage efforts in French and Japan indicate, the agency's NOC program is only a small part of a much broader effort by the U.S. intelligence community to get a handle on issues involving economics in recent years. Consider the following chronology:

- In June 1990, the CIA created the Office of Resources, Trade and Technology (RTT), which, the agency says, tracks a host of economic issues, including gathering intelligence in advance of trade negotiations and monitoring "environmental trends and civil technology challenges." In the '80s, RTT's predecessor Office on Global Issues tracked Third World debt on behalf of Treasury Secretary Nicholas Brady, according to John Gentry, a former RTT staffer.

- For many years, the CIA used the so-called National Collection Division to gather intelligence from American business leaders who traveled overseas. Under Casey's reign, the NCD was expanded; then, in the '90s, the NCD was reorganized into the Domestic Resources Division, which operates offices in a number of U.S. cities. Today, the division sometimes assigns U.S. businessmen to specific missions and, on occasion, pays them for their service, according to a former CIA officer.

- In 1991, President Bush ordered a sweeping review of U.S. intelligence needs. According to ex-CIA Director Robert Gates, the resulting directive "highlighted international economic trends as a priority intelligence issue."

- In 1992, the FBI's Development of Espionage and Counterintelligence Awareness program (DECA) launched the publication of "DECA Notes for Industry," circulating them on a classified basis to hundreds of American defense and national security companies. The DECA program was refocused on making American businessmen aware of threats from ostensibly "friendly" countries seeking to pilfer U.S. technology and trade secrets.

- At the same time, the FBI led an interagency effort to shift the focus of counterintelligence away from former Soviet bloc nations to a new "National Security Threat List," a secret compilation of some two dozen countries that allegedly spy on American industry.

- In 1992, the CIA established the Open Source Program, which was designed to get the intelligence community "on-line." The office, led by Joseph Markowitz, is tailored to help the CIA take advantage of freely available publications and databases and to set up networking technology that will allow the CIA and sister spy agencies to tap into vast amounts of technological information.

- In 1993, keeping to his campaign promise to equate national security with economic security, President Clinton brought key U.S. economic officials into the inner sanctum of the National Security Council and also created the National Economic Council as a major White House office. "Just about every day, [NEC Deputy Director] Bo Cutter is asking the CIA for information on economic issues," said a senior CIA official.

- And just last year, an interagency task force called the National Counterintelligence Center (NACIC) set up shop at the CIA, headed by Mike Waguespack of the FBI. Among the NACIC's tasks—in close coordination with the FBI's DECA program—is to assess threats to America's economic security.

—R.D.

intelligence community, and information flows both ways, informally."

Under President Clinton, there is at least one confirmed case in which CIA data was made available to the U.S. automobile industry. When, in September 1993, President Clinton announced the formulation of a cooperative research project joining the federal government with the Big Three automakers, he failed to mention that the CIA would report regularly to the car project about the research efforts of Japan's auto companies and government. Officials at the White House and the Energy and Commerce Departments confirmed the CIA's role, and a high-ranking CIA official has declared his readiness to share whatever the intelligence community's spy apparatus picks up.

In particular, the silent eavesdropping machine operated across the globe by the National Security Agency (NSA), which has the ability to intercept and monitor telephone, fax and computer communications—including sophisticated data transmissions and financial transactions—can with very little effort be turned toward economic intelligence. Mark Lowenthal, now staff director for the House Permanent Select Committee on Intelligence, has referred to the NSA as a giant vacuum cleaner. Simply by typing in the word "Toyota" on his or her computer, an NSA analyst can sort through vast stores of information about the Japanese firm.

Despite the increasing focus on economics, however, many CIA insiders say that the U.S. intelligence community is still a long way from developing true expertise and analytical capability in economics, finance and technology. "The bottom line is the intelligence community was trained, equipped and organized to watch Soviet missile silos and count Soviet tanks, not to look at fluid transnational economic interactions," said Robert Steele, a former CIA clandestine services officer. "The intelligence community isn't producing anything relevant to the president of the United States in the economic intelligence area, period."

And the CIA's budget is certainly headed south. The agency is currently undergoing a personnel reduction from 22,000 to 16,000 employees by 1997, and the overall intelligence community budget is expected to drop to \$20 billion by the year 2000, from its 1990-era peak of \$30-33 billion. But the wholesale review of the agency now under way, headed by former Secretary of Defense Les Aspin, is intended to determine exactly how far the CIA should go in providing support to industry. Speaking to a meeting of retired CIA officers in December, Aspin said bluntly, "One of the issues coming to the fore, more and more in this post-Cold War world, is the question of to what extent should the intelligence assets of the United States be used to further the gains of the business community."

Robert Dreyfuss is a freelance writer in the Washington, D.C. area.

# A separate peace

**T**

*Can the  
republic of  
Bashkortostan  
keep itself  
from becoming  
another  
Chechnya?*

**By Fred Weir**  
UFA, RUSSIA

he key to Russia's post-Soviet crisis of federalism could lie here, in the oil-rich foothills of the Ural Mountains, where a tiny non-Slavic nation first colonized by the Russian Empire 420 years ago is struggling to redefine and democratize its relationship with Moscow.

"We are a part of Russia, and we expect to remain so," says Murtaza Rakhimov, the president of the republic of Bashkortostan. "But at the same time, every nation has its own peculiarities and shouldn't be governed only by diktat from Moscow. It's too bad that authorities in Moscow still think as they did in Communist times and want to regulate life in the republics."

Bashkortostan, an England-sized territory of 4 million people located about 1,000 kilometers east of Moscow, is one of the richest and most economically

developed of Russia's roughly two dozen ethnic republics. Bashkirs are culturally Muslim people, related to Tatars, who were conquered and signed their first unification treaty with Czarist Russia in 1575. Three and a half centuries later, in 1918, Bashkortostan was the first ethnic region to join the revolution and sign up with Soviet Russia as an "autonomous republic."

Last year the Bashkirs signed yet another pact, this time with Boris Yeltsin, leader of a newly democratic, post-Soviet Russian Federation. Under this latest agreement, Bashkortostan's sovereignty is recognized by Moscow, which has granted the republic full control over its substantial oil and mineral wealth, a high degree of local autonomy and the right to forge its own international trade and political links.

The deal successfully headed off a strong and growing nationalist movement, which had been urging a full declaration of independence and a separate course of economic development for the small Ural republic. In hard bargaining, Rakhimov managed to

wring major economic and political concessions from Yeltsin in return for a largely symbolic affirmation of Bashkortostan's membership in the Russian Federation.

"Why should I cross myself like a Christian when I am a Muslim? I cannot maintain my traditions in a Russian church, only in my native land, among my ancestors and according to my own traditions," says Rakhimov, displaying his knack for stealing the nationalists' thunder. "We want to remain within Russia, but there must be mutual respect."

However, Russia's invasion of the self-declared independent Caucasus republic of Chechnya last December has clouded Bashkortostan's relations with Moscow, and has led many Bashkirs to seriously wonder whether the days of tough, centralized rule from the Kremlin are creeping back.

"We have had a democratic interlude, in which regions have been able to take some power and freedom for themselves," says Marat Kulsharipov, spokesman for the Bashkir National Movement, a moderate nationalist party. "But that brief spell is ending, and now we see the politics of force, orchestrated from Moscow, sneaking back into our relations. Chechnya is a warning to all of Russia's ethnic minorities to keep silent and obey big brother in Moscow."

More than 20 Bashkir soldiers serving in the Russian army have been killed so far in Chechnya. Several are known to be held as prisoners of war by Chechen fighters. Many here say they want Rakhimov to sign a decree exempting citizens of Bashkortostan from serving in the Russian armed forces, as the leader of the nearby republic of Chuvashia has done.

"Chechnya shows that we must find a new approach to military policy," says Rashit Islamov, director of Bashkor-



tostan's leading political research center. "Bashkirs serving in the army are committed to defending the common space of Russia from outside attack, but shouldn't be obliged to join a war against a brother republic," he says.

In a 1993 referendum, the overwhelming majority of Bashkir voters supported Rakhimov's declaration of "state sovereignty" within the Russian Federation. The vote indicated that Bashkortostan's population—roughly one-quarter ethnic Bashkirs, another quarter Tatars and almost half Russians—were fed up and hoping for deep changes after centuries of authoritarian, highly centralized government.

At the time, Rakhimov said he understood sovereignty to mean "the independence of Federation subjects, territory, their voluntary adherence to the Federation, the freedom of peoples and individual and state integrity. We believe that such principles presuppose the right of free secession from the Federation." But he added his belief that the right of republics to secede would strengthen Russia. "A reliable legal guarantee of secession rules out any return to the former [Soviet] unitarism," he said. "People will only cooperate when there is no threat of 'blood and iron.' "

Chechnya was the only one of Russia's 21 ethnic republics to demand the right to full independence following the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991. Most other Russian ethnic regions, including Bashkortostan, the neighboring oil-rich republic of Tatarstan, the fabulously wealthy Siberian republic of Sakha-Yakutia and the Caucasus ethnic melting pot of Kabardino-Balkaria, chose the path of peacefully negotiating a new federal deal with Moscow. That process has been one of post-Soviet Russia's most impressive success stories.

Today, Rakhimov says he believes Moscow might have found dozens of nonviolent ways to deal with Chechnya's obdurate refusal to discuss unity with Russia. The resort to military force, he says, undermines much of the progress that has been gained in creating a new federal system in recent years. "We feel the anti-human methods being used in Chechnya are also aimed against other republics of the Russian Federation," Rakhimov argues. "The implicit threat to us is obvious. There is no excuse for this war. It cannot be understood in any civilized context," he says. "I have repeatedly stressed my unequivocal opposition to the use of

force against Chechnya in my talks with President Yeltsin."

Since it declared sovereignty, Bashkortostan has held back a large share of the oil revenues it formerly turned over to the Soviet government, and used them to support social services, maintain infrastructure and promote local economic development. It is a heavily industrialized region, with substantial oil reserves of its own, more than 20 percent of Russia's oil-refining capacity and a significant number of major chemical, metallurgical and weapons-producing enterprises.

The results of the republic's separate economic policy since 1991 would appear to be impressive. Its standard of living is significantly above the Russian average, while levels of poverty and unemployment are markedly lower. There are no beggars on the streets of Ufa, Bashkortostan's capital of 1.2 million people and its main industrial center. Roads, lighting, telephones and central heating all seem in much better condition than other Russian cities of comparable size. Prices in Ufa's teeming markets are less than half the Moscow level.

"We have worked within the strategic course of economic reform set by Moscow," says Khalil Barlybayev, chairman of the republic's State Property Committee. "We have no choice about that, because we are part of Russia's economic space. But we have introduced a number of local modifications, which have enabled us to reduce some of the severe problems that have accompanied privatization and market change in the rest of Russia," he says.

Specifically, Barlybayev notes, the republic has gone slowly in privatizing heavy industry and oil refining, which between them employ almost 40 percent of the population and generate the lion's share of regional income. The Ufa government has maintained a strong share of state ownership in most factories to prevent the property from quickly falling into the hands of organized criminals or former party apparatchiks, as has happened in much of Russia.

"Compared with neighboring regions, such as Sverdlovsk in western Siberia, we have done much better," Barlybayev says. "In Sverdlovsk the biggest industries are collapsing under bad privatization, whereas we are making a slow and painful, but modestly successful, transition to the new system."

Much to the chagrin of Moscow privatization officials, Bashkortostan has yet to disband a single collective farm or permit private ownership of land in any form. "This republic is able to feed itself with the present system of agriculture, and that is a critical factor of stability in these difficult times," says Barlybayev. "We are not opposed to change, only to reckless change. We aren't going to de-collectivize our farms at a time when there is no material basis, or infrastructure, or mentality to support private farming in our republic," he insists.

A stroll through the center of Ufa confirms the impression that Bashkortostan has been very slow indeed to embrace the anti-Soviet revolution. Not a single statue of the USSR's founder, Vladimir Lenin, has been taken down, nor a single street renamed. The city's broad avenues and

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tree-lined boulevards still bear the names of now-disgraced Soviet government leaders, military victories, communist activities and heroes of labor.

Many Bashkirs clearly share the unabashed conservatism that appears to guide their leaders. Their attitude is a mixture of nostalgia for the stable old Soviet system and proud contempt for radical reforms that are perceived locally as an ideological fad born in Moscow. "It's true we did not join the mad rush to privatize this, democratize that, and let the free market handle everything all at once," says Rashit Islamov. "But that doesn't make us reactionaries. We have moved forward more cautiously, and we think we have done a better job of managing the crisis. We have less crime, lower unemployment and better economic prospects than most regions of Russia."

But not everyone shares this rosy view of the republic's situation, and a few dissidents warn Bashkortostan is plunging headlong toward disaster. "I think the same events happening today in Chechnya could take place here soon," says Enver Tuktamishov, a candidate for the conservative Agrarian Party in upcoming elections. "Leaders in Moscow are trying to whip up tensions against sovereign republics, because they hope to take away the scraps of freedom we have won."

Virtually all Bashkir politicians are anti-Yeltsin. The opposition to Rakhimov divides between nationalists, who urge greater independence, and neo-communists, who call for reviving the Soviet Union.

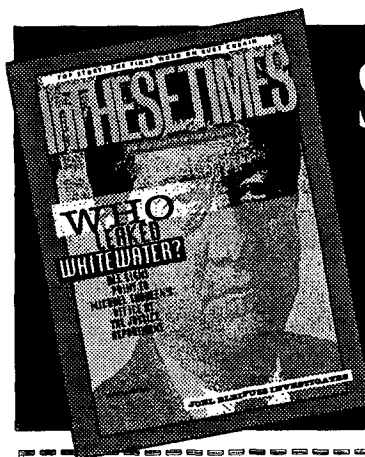
"We support the sovereignty of this republic, but we believe power and wealth are being arranged only to suit those currently in power," says Omar Moussin, a candidate for the powerful Communist Party. "So far there is no strategic plan for restructuring our industries or providing new opportunities for workers who have been displaced by the economic crisis," he says. "At best we have a slightly slower deterioration compared with other parts of the Russian Federation."

"Our problems are part and parcel of those afflicting Russia and the entire former Soviet Union. We need a political orientation that stresses reintegration and rebuilding the bonds of partnership among all nations," Moussin argues.

For some Bashkirs, the power struggle between Ufa and Moscow and the dance of sovereignty appear to have minimal meaning.

"I work hard and try to support my little daughter, even though it's getting harder every day," says Natasha Aushova, a 33-year-old oil refinery worker. "I wish politicians would come up with a way to turn the economy around and let us see some hope at last. I don't believe in all this talk about a separate solution for our republic. That's just demagoguery. Bashkortostan is a pimple on the behind of Russia. We will either work together with Russians for a better life, or die alone."

Fred Weir writes regularly from Russia for *In These Times*.



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## I N T H E A R T S

## Small changes

**Iranian  
director Abbas  
Kiarostami  
offers real life  
a second take.**

By Pat Aufderheide

There's praise, and then there's praise. The renowned Japanese film director Akira Kurosawa recently said of Iranian director Abbas Kiarostami, "When Satyajit Ray died, I was quite depressed, but after watching Kiarostami's films, I thought God had found the right person to take his place."

Of course, in the United States, only filmgoers who haunt film festivals have even heard of Kiarostami, who has been making films since 1969 and who has been on the international scene since 1986.

Getting to know the work of Abbas Kiarostami by watching his latest work—*Through the Olive Trees*, just now released by Miramax and showing in major cities—feels a little like coming in at the end of the show. It's a charming experience, one whose subtler pleasures sneak up on

you. The film, the last in an almost accidental trilogy, marks the mature development of a major world figure.

In *Through the Olive Trees*, a film crew (at work on a movie called *And Life Goes On...*) has descended upon an Iranian village in the wake of an earthquake, discovering its residents picking their way carefully among the ruins. As we watch the director and his brisk assistant at work, the challenges they face making their film serve to reveal something of the terms of life in the small community.

While filming scenes of daily life in the aftermath of the disaster, the filmmakers come across a newlywed couple they want to film. Since the new husband stutters, the filmmakers call upon a local construction worker, Hossein, to substitute for him on film. But the actress, Farkhonde, won't speak to him, and it turns out there's more to this story than meets the eye. Hossein is an illiterate workman, and Farkhonde is a student. He's in love with her, but because of his background her family won't consider him.

This strikes him as unjust and absurd: the literate should marry the illiterate, he argues; if illiterates just marry each other, who will teach the children to read?

The story is filmed in a self-confidently neorealist style, enriched by Kiarostami's delight in formalist play. The neorealists, filming in the unsettled conditions of postwar Italy, masterfully transformed the limitations of gritty locations and low-budget production into assets, creating profound humanist dramas of daily life. Like the films of the neorealists, Kiarostami's superbly crafted film works on the small scale. At the core of the film are many takes of Hossein's proposal, each carrying the love story slightly forward, and in the process revealing the terms and tensions of a whole society.

At the same time, Kiarostami never misses a chance to tinker with our position as viewers, beginning with an opening shot in which an actor announces he'll be playing the director. The film ends without a tidy conclusion, with both a long shot and a long take, reminding us that we are only spectators, but inviting us to imagine the continuation of the story as well.

The self-referentiality gets even more elaborate when *Through the Olive Trees* is seen alongside the two films that preceded it. It is not only a film about the making of film, but a film about the making of Kiarostami's own *And Life Goes On...*, the second film in the trilogy, which in turn deals with the making of the first.

The first film of the series, *Where Is the Friend's Home?* (1986), sets the stage for the elaborate cross-referencing of the following two. In this film, a study of daily life, a young boy (who later appears as a gopher in *Through the Olive*



*Trees*) must return a friend's notebook before the morning, when his small-minded schoolteacher has threatened to expel the child who's missing his homework.

In the second film, *And Life Goes On...*, the director of the first film and his son return to the town, after an earthquake, and go in search of the boys from the first film. Ignoring the advice of practically everyone, the director makes his way through the devastated countryside, getting as far as an adjacent village. There's no news of the boys to be found, but the director does encounter remarkable stories of loss and endurance, including, of course, the story of the newlyweds.

Many were shocked that a movie about a major national catastrophe would be filled with so many wry and indulgent moments. But the film perfectly showcased Kiarostami's particular humanism, a respect for the felt drama of daily life.

Kiarostami may be the first Iranian director to have a

The cream of the resulting crop, which circulates internationally, suggests that the delicate ideological brokering of Farabi bureaucrats has been effective. Films by artists such as Kiarostami, Mohsen Makhmalbakh and Dariush Mehrjui preach tolerance and an appreciation of human foibles, and feature social commentary on such hot topics as the Iran-Iraq war.

That Kiarostami's work evokes neorealism is not surprising. He grew up on the works of Italian neorealists, with a particular attachment to Roberto Rossellini's work. "But it's more a question of congruence of taste than it is a decision to follow their example," he told *In These Times* in an interview at the American Film Institute in Washington, D.C. "I think the real reason is that there is a similarity between the present situation of Iran and of postwar Italy."

Like the Italian neorealists, Kiarostami says that he draws his inspiration not so much from films as from life.

He recalled for me one of his "formative moments" as a filmmaker:

"One snowy day I was going to work and saw a mother walking down the street, holding a baby wrapped up in her chador. The baby was clearly burning up with fever, and its eyes were nearly shut. I happened to be walking behind them, and I was staring at the child and waving my hand, the way you do to little children. I thought the baby couldn't even see me, its little eyes were so swollen up. And the mother didn't even know I was there.

"When we got to the intersection, I saw to my astonishment that the child with great effort pulled out his hand, and waved back at me. Well, it shocked and touched me, and it also struck me that there

should be a way to show this moment to people."

*Through the Olive Trees* is an introduction for many Americans both to a remarkable director and to a national cinema. The Iranian entry for the Oscars, it was ignored by the nominating committee, a fact that rouses Kiarostami to an indictment of Disney-owned distributor Miramax, which failed to distribute *Through the Olive Trees* on a national scale or promote it vigorously before the votes. "This is a small movie, it's low budget," Kiarostami says, "but it's not pathetic, and it did not deserve this treatment."

But Kiarostami won't brood on the setback for long. He is returning to the same small village to make yet another film. This time, he says, "everyone will be playing a role opposite to their character."

(Thanks to Katayoun Beglari for translation.)

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**Through the Olive Trees**  
Directed by Abbas Kiarostami

film distributed in the United States, but he comes out of a well-established tradition.

The Iranian film industry last year produced about 60 films, and its audience is larger than it ever has been.

That's largely due to the efforts of the Farabi Film Foundation. The first years after the Iranian revolution were perilous ones for cinema, with some theaters torched and financing for filmmaking essentially nonexistent. A group of intellectuals who combined a concern for the endangered art of film with impeccable Muslim religious credentials launched Farabi to provide support for quality "family" films that would not offend religious filmgoers. Khomeini enthusiastically backed them, and the foundation received government funding until 1992, when economic austerity forced a cutback.

# I N P R I N T

## Revolted by elites

By Christopher Phelps

When I first encountered the writings of Christopher Lasch in the mid-'80s, I didn't find them easy going. The intelligence and historical knowledge he required of his reader, his political agility, his relentless refusal to let truisms substitute for thought—all stretched me to the limits of my youthful capacities.

As the shock of unfamiliarity wore off, though, I found the example set by Lasch in books like *The New Radicalism in America* (1965) and *The Agony of the American Left* (1969) tremendously inspiring. I identified instinctively with his democratic radicalism and moral conviction, but I was even more profoundly impressed by Lasch's uncompromising integrity. Even at the height of his '60s radicalism, Lasch was toughest on his own political traditions, unwilling to countenance their errors.

Lasch's prose was beautiful—graceful and lyrical, but never pretentious. He had an exhilarating ability to mix political commitment with intellectual rigor and independence of mind. I found his vintage '60s writings proof positive that one could write a vigorous critical history of American culture in a revolutionary idiom just as powerful, fresh and appropriate to this country as Marx's was to the Europe of his day.

When in 1992 I entered the graduate history program at the University of Rochester, where Christopher Lasch was teaching, I was excited about the prospect of meeting Lasch and working with him. I had been primed for the experience by studying under Casey Blake, a former Lasch student, at Reed College. Yet I was also full of trepidation, for the Lasch I admired was long gone, politically speaking, replaced by a scalding critic of the left, an opponent of modernity, a figure who evoked intense animus among feminists. Friends told me Lasch had become a right-wing curmudgeon. A few worried that I might fall under his sway.

That reputation, combined with my first-hand knowl-

edge of his polemical voice in print, left me unprepared to discover that Christopher Lasch in person was modest, gentle, even *shy*. It also took me some time to realize the extent to which Lasch, though he had ostensibly fought his way clear from the left to a place beyond conventional politics, was still very much engaged in an ongoing contemplation and criticism of the liberal and radical traditions.

The left had a hard time with Christopher Lasch, if only because he had a hard time with us, and in the end was not one of us at all. Over the last 15 years, Lasch kept up a barrage of barbs against liberal elites, causing many liberals and radicals to mistake him for a neoconservative, if not a fascist. They failed either to acknowledge or understand how much Lasch's criticism of liberalism was anchored in a concept of participatory democracy that he had picked up during his years on the left.

Since the January release of Lasch's latest, posthumously published book, completed in a remarkable surge of will in the year before he died of cancer on Valentine's Day in 1994, many liberals have repeated that error. "If the title of Christopher Lasch's final book, *The Revolt of the Elites and the Betrayal of Democracy*, sounds vaguely familiar," writes Michiko Kakutani disapprovingly in the opening paragraph of her review for the daily *New York Times*, "it's probably because the book reverberates with echoes of former Vice President Dan Quayle's heated 1992 attack on the 'cultural elite.'"

Philosopher Richard Rorty, writing in *The New Yorker*, gives "Two Cheers for Elitism." Lasch, Rorty contends, never came to terms with a critical problem at the very core of his populist ideal: that "the people whose honesty, courage and moral firmness [he] celebrates are the same people who believe everything Rush Limbaugh tells them, and who were shocked by Oliver North's defeat rather than his candidacy."

Criticism of the kind advanced by Kakutani and Rorty would have been no surprise to Lasch, who titled one chapter in *The Revolt of the Elites* "The Lost Art of Argument." He would have taken such reviews as further evidence of the growing inability of disputants to correctly characterize their opponent's views—for such reviews link Lasch by association with the market ideologues of the Republican right whose politics he explicitly rejected.

It's not just establishment liberals who have been befuddled by Lasch. His next-to-last book, *The True and Only Heaven* (1991), for example, prompted *The Progressive's* Matthew Rothschild to excoriate Lasch as a "peculiar kind of right-wing crank" who treated fascism and racism as lesser evils than liberalism and progress. Over on the right, meanwhile, Bruce Frohnen of *The National Review* accused Lasch of a "Marxist" opposition to wage slavery.

This comical juxtaposition—the right wing sees a Marxist, the left a man soft on fascism—illustrates one of the twin errors committed by those seeking to make sense of Lasch. Critics have tended to project upon him whatever brand of politics they most dislike, from Marxism to Dan Quayle's

moralism. Admirers, equally without success, have tried to blithely assimilate Lasch into their conventional political traditions, ignoring the challenges he posed to the familiar politics of left and right.

The latter flaw has been on display, too, in reviews of *The Revolt of the Elites*. *American Spectator* editor Christopher Caldwell, for instance, reviewing the book for *The Wall Street Journal*, sees much to commend in Lasch's blast at liberal elitism, wishing only that Lasch had followed the argument to where it "logically leads": an attack on big government. Wishful thinking of a different sort could be found in the pages of this magazine, in a review by Mark Gauvreau Judge that tried to make Lasch's views out to be perfectly compatible with socialism, even if Lasch himself would never have admitted it. (See *In These Times*, January 23.)

At the end of his life, though, Lasch was neither neocon nor socialist. There was a time, of course, some 20-odd

(1979), he was an eloquent, iconoclastic proponent of revolutionary socialism.

But Lasch dropped socialism after the publication of *The Culture of Narcissism*, which met with a storm of criticism from feminists and radicals for its defense of authority and the family. The criticism led Lasch to conclude that, without quite realizing it, he had strayed so far from the path the left had taken that future association with it made no sense.

Doomed forever to be misrepresented as a moralistic attack on Americans for their big egos, *The Culture of Narcissism* was actually a sympathetic psychoanalytic treatment of the fragility of the self under advanced capitalism. Too often Lasch's critics on the left have neglected the explicit calls he made in that bestselling book for socialist-feminism and the abolition of capitalism.

Despite his estrangement from the left, Lasch retained his objections to wage labor, corporate organization and the domination of society by bureaucratic and managerial elites. While at times Lasch spoke in ways that made uninitiated readers see him as a cultural reactionary akin to Dan Quayle or Rush Limbaugh, he didn't blame social problems on such nebulous forces as "the sixties" or such convenient targets as single mothers. Rather, he argued, it was advanced capitalism itself that had undermined the family, religion, community and the work ethic. Such institutions and values, he thought, had no chance against the merciless bottom line, against the consumer ethos of instant gratification, or the degradations of wage labor. Lasch therefore disdained all right-wing ideologues who praised "traditional family values" while defending a social system that causes all that is solid to melt into air.

Consider Lasch's treatment of higher education in *The Revolt of the Elites*. In the essay "Academic Pseudo-Radicalism," Lasch blasts literary scholars and high theorists for their inflated, meaningless claims of "subversion." But then he directs an even stronger broadside against the corrosive influence of corporate capital: "It is corporate control that has diverted social resources from the humanities into military and technological research, fostered an obsession with quantification that has destroyed the social sciences, replaced the English language with bureaucratic jargon, and created a top-heavy administrative



years ago, when Lasch was one of the finest writers on the left. In the early '60s, while teaching at Iowa, he was a courageous critic of Cold War liberalism, aggression toward Cuba and the war in Vietnam. At Northwestern and Rochester in the late '60s and early '70s he defended Marxist scholarship and Freudian inquiry against the more mindless manifestations of campus radicalism. In essays in *The New York Review of Books* and in such books as *The World of Nations* (1973) and *The Culture of Narcissism*



apparatus whose educational vision begins and ends with the bottom line." Can anyone picture Roger Kimball or Dinesh D'Souza biting the hand of the Olin Foundation to say such a thing?

If equating Lasch with the contemporary right is useless, so is treating him as a democratic socialist in spirit. No purpose is served by trying to push Lasch back into a political orientation he explicitly repudiated. I can attest to this directly, for had Lasch's distaste for corporate power meant that he was any kind of a socialist in his later years, he and I might have had a smoother time of it.

I came to know Christopher Lasch—or Kit, as he was known to all who were familiar with him—in the last course he taught, a graduate colloquium on 20th-century American history. He and I sparred frequently. Sometimes, walking home after class over the footbridge across the Genesee River, I would positively fume, convinced that Kit had deliberately baited me so as to dislodge me from my Marxism. I can still see him, whirling to face me in the midst of a debate over turn-of-the-century populism and Debsian socialism, tapping his pencil on his pad, and asking, in that inimitable, dry way of his, "How can you still believe that?"

What confounded observers most about the later Lasch was not just his politics but his self-avowed class allegiance. Neither right nor left could grasp that, far from being a neo-conservative or a fascist or a Marxist in his last years, Lasch was a petty-bourgeois populist democrat.

The term "petty bourgeois" has acquired overpowering connotations of opprobrium and shame, and it is now virtually impossible to use in a sociological sense. In socialist circles it has long been a term of abuse to be used when accusing someone—especially an intellectual—of slipping toward liberalism or reformism.

But Lasch never conceded an inch to liberalism. He meant to restore the term "petty bourgeois" to its original precision as a description of a very particular social category, the class of small property owners, shopkeepers, farmers, craftsmen, small producers and the like. In Lasch's social theory the petty bourgeoisie, rather than being simply a mediocre bunch of waverers straddling the class line, was the wellspring of moral virtue. The deterioration of workmanship, self-reliance and community in the United States, Lasch believed, owed much to the reduction of small property holding to an incidental social and economic status.

Yes, this was an abandonment of socialism. But at least Lasch was honest about it, openly declaring himself a populist rather than, like so many weary souls, preserving a "socialist" facade and inching steadily to the right.

Despite my disagreements with Lasch, I never had any truck with radicals who claimed he was tending in a "fascist direction." Lasch's was an American, not a European, populism. He looked to the independent farmers, artisans and agrarian rebels of the 19th century for his inspiration, harking back to an egalitarian, democratically governed society of smallholders. All the way to the end, Lasch rejected the stock-in-trade of fascists: elitism, state control, violence, cor-

poratism, racism, technocratic efficiency.

I did find many of Lasch's ideas retrograde, even wacky—as when, in a *Harper's* forum several years ago, he actually proposed a constitutional amendment to ban divorce for couples with children under the age of 21. He had a utopian streak a mile wide—anyone seeking to end wage labor by restoring a nation of self-reliant small property holders would need it—and his tastes could run in inchoate directions. (In *The Revolt of the Elites* he upholds Martin Luther King and the civil rights movement as paragons of petty-bourgeois virtue, and then in almost the same breath rails against the dislocative effects caused by the desegregation of lower-middle-class white neighborhoods and schools.)

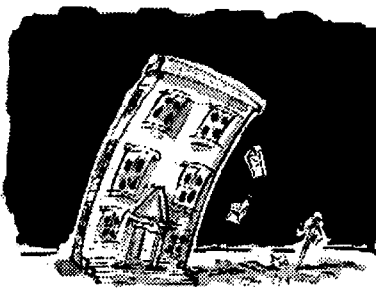
Lasch, I thought, too often confused professionals of all grades with the real power elite. I could not swallow his claim that sensitivity to racism, sexism and xenophobia merely reflects the condescending, feel-good mindset of a therapeutic elite—class war perpetrated in cultural guise.

Unlike some Lasch students, therefore, I cannot claim to carry on Kit's political legacy. But one of the greatest privileges of my life was to have been his student. I am proud of it, and I saw too much value in the example that Kit set as a writer, historian and intellectual to countenance moralistic dismissals of him as a wayward revolutionary—though that he was, without a doubt.

As children, we think of death as an absolute cessation and absence. Slowly the complexity of the experience dawns upon us. When a person leaves behind a brilliant, contested set of writings, when in life we struggled honestly and respectfully with them, when their words still ring in our ears late at night, then our conversations with them never really come to an end. Our disputes are carried on, half-consciously, in our thoughts and work. Farewell, Kit. The argument continues. ◀

**Christopher Phelps**, a graduate student in American history at the University of Rochester, joined with Casey Blake to interview Christopher Lasch for *The Journal of American History* (March 1994).

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# The plague years

By J. W. Mason

Now is not a good time to get sick. That cough you've got might just be the flu, or it might be the first stage of Marburg's disease. A fever of 101 could be the beginning of Lassa fever. Didn't you shake hands with someone named Singh the other day? You might have the plague; *he* probably did. And by the way, when was your last AIDS test?

These are the plague years, or at least that is the reputation of our time. The flip side of our obsession with health is our fascination with disease, and most fascinating are exotic diseases with exotic origins. Coupled with free-floating post-Cold War anxiety, this obsession packs quite a punch. When a few dozen cases of plague, an easily controlled illness whose name is nonetheless a byword for uncontrollable peril, were reported in India last year, the whole country was quarantined. Western papers were quick to link the teeming disease organisms with India's teeming inhabitants, leaving their readers half-expecting another Black Death to sweep out of the East. AIDS, as everyone knows, came from darkest Africa. And now a book called *The Hot Zone* has reached the top of the bestseller lists by painting names like "Ebola virus" and "Marburg's disease" on the blank spaces of the map in place of dragons and basilisks. Fear of disease borrows liberally from all the Great Fears that preceded it, but perhaps the closest parallel is the '80s obsession with terrorism. Both terrorists and new diseases originate among benighted dark-skinned people, both strike at people like us, and both require legions of specialists and high-tech equipment for our defense.

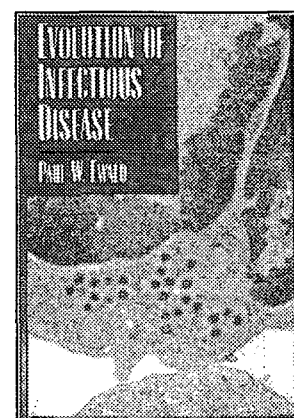
Shedding some much-needed light in this darkness is a little book published last year called *Evolution of Infectious Disease*, by Paul Ewald. This is that rarity, a clear, accessible book for a general audience by a practicing scientist. Ewald, a professor of biology at Amherst College, writes in a plain and straightforward style, occasionally dry but never technical. He is not above referring to the movie *Alien* to make a point about the fine line between parasites and predators, but he's never patronizing. He treats his readers with the same respect he'd treat his colleagues, offering arguments and evidence

rather than handing down "findings" from on high, and always leaving space for the opposing point of view.

Ewald's target is the long-established consensus among medical researchers that holds that disease organisms evolve toward benignity. As biologist Lewis Thomas put it with characteristic eloquence, "Disease usually represents the inconclusive negotiations for symbiosis ... a biological misinterpretation of borders." The corollary of this view is that the most dangerous diseases are new ones, which have the furthest to go in their "negotiations for symbiosis." It is this idea that forms the scientific underpinning, such as it is, for fears of exotic new diseases like Marburg and Ebola. Ewald, on the other hand, rejects the notion that diseases have an inherent tendency to evolve toward benignity, arguing instead that new diseases are generally the least harmful because they are least able to overcome the host's defenses. In the long run diseases evolve to a level of virulence that can be mild or severe depending on their mode of transmission and their ability to survive inside and outside their hosts. It's not particular disease organisms that kill or incapacitate people but rather the conditions that favor the evolution of their more virulent strains; the same disease can kill under one set of circumstances and annoy under another.

For any disease, Ewald argues, there's a trade-off between virulence and transmission. The goal of pathogens, like other organisms, is to propagate themselves and their genes. A pathogen that reproduces rapidly, thus causing severe illness, may beat out its slower relatives within a given host; if the illness is too severe, however, and the host is incapacitated, either host or pathogen may be wiped out before another host can be infected.

The key word here is "may." For example, rhinovirus, which causes the common cold, requires direct contact between people to be transmitted and cannot survive for long outside its host; thus colds must remain mild enough for an infected individual to come into contact with new potential hosts. A mutant cold that made people too sick to go to work or school could not infect more than a handful of people; too virulent for its own good, it would die out. On the other hand, malaria, spread by mosquitoes, loses nothing by incapacitating its host; indeed, an individual too sick to swat mosquitoes will be bitten more. If the host dies, the pathogen's loss is small; passed on to hundreds of mosquitoes, it will have no problem finding a new one. The unexpected consequence is that mosquito netting and



**Evolution of Infectious Disease**  
By Paul W. Ewald  
Oxford University Press  
298 pp., \$35

mosquito-proof housing, if available widely enough, will not only reduce the number of people who suffer from malaria but make malaria itself less deadly. If the feverish individual lying on his or her bed cannot be reached by mosquitoes, the only malaria organisms that survive will be those that leave their hosts well enough to leave their houses. And given the speed with which microorganisms evolve, these effects can be expected within just a few years.

Perhaps the most dramatic example of how a disease can quickly change its virulence to match changed conditions is the great flu epidemic of 1918. In the trenches of Europe, soldiers too sick to move could still infect dozens of trenchmates and dozens or even hundreds more soldiers with whom they shared ambulances and hospitals. Under these circumstances, the flu virus had no incentive to keep its hosts on their feet, and the deadly strains quickly out-competed the mild ones. These new strains were too virulent to survive indefinitely in the general population, but before they died out they killed millions of people worldwide.

Together these principles of disease evolution provide a powerful new argument in favor of preventive medicine. We can tame those illnesses we cannot cure by creating conditions under which virulence is not in their interest. Ewald's conclusions run against conventional wisdom and much of the medical literature, but perhaps not against common sense: the danger of new plagues in the future depends not on the appearance of new pathogens but on changes in human practices, and the heroes in the struggle with disease are not expensive laboratories and highly trained scientists, but condoms, mosquito netting and clean water.

A discussion of new plagues, of course, is really a discussion of AIDS. Here is a virus that apparently has begun infecting human beings only recently and that is not transmitted by arthropod (like malaria or plague) or water (like cholera or dysentery) and cannot survive for long periods outside its host (like smallpox or tuberculosis). Why is it so deadly? The answer, and its implications for the search for a cure, is perhaps the main reason why this book deserves as broad a readership as possible.

The first surprise is that AIDS is not, in fact, a new disease. Studies of HIV's genetic structure indicate that it has been evolving in humans for one or more centuries, and possibly much longer. Yet only in the past two decades has HIV regularly caused AIDS. For generations HIV infections in humans were basically harmless, causing AIDS only rarely. (This is still the case with most of the SIVs, HIV's monkey-infecting relatives.)

This knowledge gives a whole new color to the problem of AIDS' origins. While giving the final rebuttal to the idea that AIDS is a product of medical research, Ewald demonstrates that the conspiracy theorists have gotten the key point right: this act of God was carried out by human hands. And they are the same hands that have caused so much other misery in Africa. The global economy's devastation of subsistence agriculture across much of Africa following the Second World War led to the breakdown of tradi-

tional family patterns, massive migration to the cities and a tremendous increase in prostitution. These trends, along with the spread of other sexually transmitted diseases, increased many-fold HIV's chances for transmission, creating an environment that for the first time favored rapidly reproducing, highly virulent strains of HIV.

The most powerful piece of evidence for this theory is the remarkable divergence in virulence between HIV-1 and HIV-2, a separate, more mild strain of HIV found in West Africa. According to Ewald, "400 person-years of follow-up on HIV-2-infected women revealed only one case of AIDS and one case of ARC (AIDS-Related Complex). This risk of progression to AIDS is about one-tenth the risk among those with HIV-1 infections." HIV-2 is limited to a few West African countries, notably Senegal, which have so far escaped the worst social and economic ravages of First World-imposed planning. The least virulent strains appear to be found in exactly those areas where traditional agriculture has survived intact, extended families remain strong, and adherence to Islam has discouraged prostitution and premarital and extramarital sex. Where these conditions apply, HIV-1 has not been able to establish itself and AIDS remains rare; where they do not, HIV-1 or virulent strains of HIV-2 have quickly appeared.

What do these facts about AIDS' history suggest about its future? Assessing current possibilities for a cure, Ewald pessimistically concludes that "if these and other approaches, such as antibody therapy, gene therapy, or blocking of the manufacture of HIV within cells, yield effective treatment, this effectiveness will be short-lived. HIV will continue to evolve resistance to AZT and other anti-viral compounds ... and it will continue to evolve around antibodies produced by vaccines, laboratories, or genetically engineered cells."

All is not hopeless, however: reducing HIV's chances for transmission will favor the mildest strains until at last the virus learns to live with us, and we can live with it. A glimpse of what AIDS might look like after several decades of intensive, worldwide condom and needle distribution and sex education is provided by human T-cell lymphotropic virus (HTLV), a retrovirus related to HIV that, like it, infects white blood cells. HTLV spreads through the same modes of transmission as AIDS, but in Japan, where it is primarily found, intravenous drug use and prostitution are relatively rare and condom use is widespread. So HTLV is spread mainly from mother to child. The result is that while HTLV eventually causes fatal cancers in about 5 percent of those infected, it does so only after 60 years. (In the Caribbean, where HTLV is sometimes transmitted sexually and by intravenous drug use, the latency period is about 30 years.) Increasing HIV's latency period to 30 years, or even 60 years, would not be the same as a cure, of course. But if the same resources are instead used for intensive research toward finding a cure, it doesn't take much imagination to guess what the AIDS of a few decades from now will look like: it will look like the AIDS of today. ◀

J.W. Mason is a freelance writer living in Chicago.



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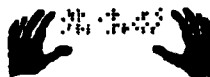
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Continued from page 40

Hollywood version of Dorothy Parker suffered most not from alcoholism or lack of talent (or, for that matter, actress Jennifer Jason Leigh's unintelligible accent). No, what kept her from greatness was that most feminine of weaknesses—you guessed it, she was a woman who loved too much. In *Disclosure*, Demi Moore helped expose the frightful ways in which powerful women sexually harass their male underlings, while in *True Lies*, Jamie Lee Curtis found liberation and regained the love of her bored husband by shedding her mousey clothes and gyrating in thong and high heels. Quite.

And if such a remarkable interpretation of female empowerment would seem isolated to a male-oriented Schwarzenegger action flick, there was Sally Field's bizarre role as Forrest Gump's gutsy, can-do mother. She played a woman who acquires school admission for her dimwitted son, not by outsmarting but by having sex (of the noisily aerobic variety, which has the effect of turning her desperation into a vaudeville gag) with a supercilious headmaster. She pontificates in epigrams that have all the depth of Robert Fulghum maxims, and spends her life contentedly tending hearth and home while her mentally handicapped son travels the world and changes history.

There was also Robin Wright, Gump's love object, who needed an idiot to rescue her from the strip bar where her dream of folk-singer celebrity had devolved into strumming a guitar in the nude. As if that wasn't enough, Wright's greatest purpose in *Gump* seems to have been to introduce the cretin-hero to sex—which she accomplishes in a single tryst, before going off to secretly bear and rear his child, contract AIDS and die.

Given this backlash, it's not surprising that female audiences flocked to see *Little Women*. And it was encouraging to hear that the movie was made by women: directed by Gillian Armstrong (*My Brilliant Career*), produced by Denise Di Novi (*Heathers*) and written by Robin Swicord. If a man had been in charge, would this classic have been "updated" by having Jo March, the main character, sell her body instead of her hair for money to support the family? Would she, as an aspiring writer, win over prospective book publishers by hitching up her hoop skirts and wowing them à la Sharon Stone? (All right, I exaggerate. A little.) At any rate, neither the highly praised movie nor its female director was deemed Oscar-nomination-caliber, although Winona Ryder, the star, did get a Best Actress nod. Her Jo was a staunch, intellectually ambitious (a nearly miraculous trait in the age of *Gump* and *Ace Ventura*) heroine. Too bad Hollywood had to reach back to a 19th-century source to find such a creature.

Not that *Little Women* was exactly a feminist manifesto. The characters go caroling, play the piano, paint teacups and generally look after the house. Susan Sarandon—now in her late 40s and therefore given nearly every Earth Mother role that comes down the pike—played the family matriarch, but it was another maternal turn, as a lawyer who

takes on the case of a surrogate child in *The Client*, that got her a nomination from the Academy. As Susan Faludi has observed, women are allowed to be strong-minded and admirable in the movies—just so long as their willpower is exerted on behalf of their children and families. And devotion is unquestionably the primary, if not the only, characteristic of Helen Mirren's loving wife Queen Charlotte in *The Madness of King George*, which garnered her a nomination for Best Supporting Actress.

This year's other nominees include: the mentally unstable, Jessica Lange in *Blue Sky* and Miranda Richardson in *Tom and Viv*; two mob molls, Jennifer Tilly in *Bullets Over Broadway* and Uma Thurman in *Pulp Fiction* (whose dramatic moment comes when she is passed out cold from a drug overdose); and a conniving egomaniac, Dianne Wiest, in *Bullets Over Broadway*.

Now, obviously, not every role has to project a positive female image, and many of the nominated actresses are being rewarded for nuanced performances that managed to be either screamingly funny or deeply moving. But the Academy undoubtedly had a tough time coming up with enough performances to nominate, given the scarcity of decent parts, and the overall depiction of women on the big screen was nothing short of underwhelming. To echo Dorothy Parker, whose legend will long outlast this year's celluloid portrait—when it came to women's images in 1994, Hollywood ran the gamut from A to B.

Maura Mahoney is a contributing editor of *The Baffler*.

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# I N T H E E N D

## Big girls and little women

By Maura Mahoney

Recognize this soundbite? "My one hope was that we could create a more blue feeling in the room, but not make it so blue that it would be dark and shrink the room, especially at night." That earthshaking statement came from none other than Hillary Rodham Clinton during the unveiling of the White House's newly refurbished (and creatively named) Blue Room. One nationally published photo showed Hillary poised before the stateroom curtains in a Mary Tyler Moore hat-toss pose, as if the thrill of picking exactly the right shade of azure had thrown her into some sort of housewifely ecstasy. You can almost hear the echo of millions of feminists gritting their teeth, can't you. Unfortunately, in a year when the much-ballyhooed "first modern First Lady" found herself retreating from policy-making to interior decorating, women were barraged with enough recidivist images to give them a newfound empathy for the First Lady's choice of color, too.

Nowhere was this as evident as in the movie industry, the premier business devoted to creating and selling images. Sure, Barbra Streisand donned her bifocals and advocated liberalism at Harvard, but such small-stage



Left: Dianne Wiest in *Bullets Over Broadway*.

Below: Susan Sarandon in *Little Women*.



moonlighting from an incurably irritating actress could only be obscured by the seemingly endless parade of twits, sex objects, victims and nonentities that was projected from the big screen and into our collective consciousness during 1994.

The tenor of the times was perfectly cast last March when the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences awarded a squealing 9-year-old the Oscar for best supporting actress. (Reverse the gender and picture the outcry. Can you imagine, say, Macaulay Culkin beating out Harvey Keitel? Of course not.) The message was clear: when it comes to women, Hollywood prefers children.

At least one aspiring Oscar statuette got the message and was duly rewarded with a nomination for this year's statue: Jodie Foster, an actress who enjoys practically universal carte blanche for her intelligence and pc credibility, is now—playing at a theater near you—not a feminist heroine, but a "wild child." She runs around gibbering and skinny-dips euphorically in the moonlight. Oh, where have you gone, Norma Rae?

But 1994 really seems to have been the Year of the Babe, best typified by the schlocky *Bad Girls*, the memorably dismal female ensemble piece that Janet Maslin of the *New York Times* aptly described as "having all the legitimacy of Cowpoke Barbie, with a lot less entertainment value." Even less ludicrous films managed only to relegate women to the dustbin of their relationships with men. The

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